

The Labyrinth
Paul Hervieu







The Labyrinth

THE LABYRINTH

[LE DÉDALE]

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

BY

PAUL HERVIEU



AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION
BY BARRETT H. CLARK AND
LANDER MAC CLINTOCK

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WITHDRAWN

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TO
MADAME JULIA BARTET
RESPECTFUL HOMAGE
OF THE MOST PROFOUND ADMIRATION

P. H.

Paul Hervieu

PAUL HERVIEU was born at Neuilly on the Seine, September 2, 1857. His early education was of a fragmentary character for, entering the Lycée Bonaparte at Paris in 1869 he was soon forced, on the breaking out of the war of 1870, to leave for Dieppe. From that city he attended in turn, and for short periods only, schools in Boulogne-sur-mer, then Fontainebleau, and finally returned to Paris, to the Lycée Condorcet. After the completion of his preliminary studies, he became a student in the Law School, from which he was graduated in 1881, and entered the office of a law firm. Appointed secretary to the Mexican Embassy, he refused, preferring to remain and take charge of the *Républicain de Seine-et-Marne*. In 1882 Hervieu's first book, *Diogène-le-Chien* appeared. Guy de Maupassant praised it highly and predicted that the author would "soon be known." From this time on, Hervieu contributed articles, sketches, and stories to the daily newspapers; a number of these appeared later in book form. Between the years 1881-1896, he wrote numerous novels and further sketches: *La Bêtise parisienne* (1884); *Les Yeux verts et les Yeux bleus* (1887); *L'Inconnu* (1887); *Les Deux Plaisanteries* (1889); *Flirt* (1889); *L'Exorcisée* (1891); *Peints par Eux-mêmes* (1894); *L'Armature* (1895); *Le Petit Duc* (1896). His first play, *Point de Lendemain*, a

one-act adaptation of a story by Vivant Denon, was produced in 1890. Alphonse Daudet it was who suggested the writing of the next play; this was *Les Paroles Restent*, a "dramatic comedy" in three acts; it was first seen on the boards of the Vaudeville (Paris), in 1892. Three years later the young dramatist achieved his first considerable success: *Les Tenailles* appeared at the Comédie Française. The same theater brought forth the next two plays, *La Loi de l'Homme* (1897) and *L'Énigme* (1901). But it was *La Course du Flambeau* (1901) that was destined to make its author famous in his own country, and establish his reputation firmly; it was produced at the Vaudeville. *Théroigne de Méricourt*, a historical drama in six acts was played by Sarah Bernhardt at her theater in 1902. *Le Dédale*, one of Hervieu's greatest successes, was seen at the Comédie Française the following year. *Le Réveil*, *Modestie*, *Connais-toi*, and *Bagatelle*, complete the list of his plays; these, with the exception of the light one-act *Modestie*, were first produced at the Comédie, (1905, 1909, 1912).

A member of the French Academy, president of the Society of Dramatic Authors, the recipient of nearly every public honor that can be accorded to a French writer, M. Hervieu is held in the highest esteem by his confrères and respected by the French public at large.

Diogène-le-Chien, Hervieu's first work, is called a novel; it is however, a philosophical essay; well received by the critics, especially by Anatole France and Maupassant, it was fairly successful with the public in general, who were delighted with its gentle irony and quiet cynicism. The

book is characterized by that nervous, high-pressure, and rather difficult style which is found in Hervieu's best works. *L'Armature* and *Peints par Eux-mêmes* are among the finest of the author's works of fiction, and they are interesting as being illustrative of the good and bad qualities of all his writings. *L'Armature* is clear and unified, with a central figure around which moves a well-constructed and carefully managed story; in *Peints par Eux-mêmes* the story is perhaps less unified, though "moving" and highly interesting. Certain scenes in these novels have been cited as coming from a man who was a true dramatist, and it is significant that M. Brioux has made a play out of *L'Armature*. Only one dramatic work of any importance preceded these novels—*Les Paroles Restent*—and that was scarcely indicative of the more mature work to come. The question of "influences" is a difficult one, but it is certain that Hervieu showed as much promise of the dramatist to be in his novel *L'Armature*, as in his play *Les Paroles Restent*.

It is as a writer of plays that Paul Hervieu is pre-eminently known. He and Brioux are the greatest living exponents of the "thesis" play; neither ever wrote a play without having some distinct and immediate purpose in view. If this purpose was not the righting of a wrong, it was at least the illustration of some law of nature bearing directly upon some social abuse. Both are actuated by a desire to benefit mankind materially, either by pointing out the road to good or—as is more frequently the case—by showing the pitfalls on the road to evil. Hervieu, himself a lawyer, in some of his best plays, attacks the law because he con-

siders it in many respects unjust; Brieux attacks all authority because he is convinced that "in human hands it becomes tyranny." As an artist, because of his distinctive style and more fastidious sense of form, Hervieu must be conceded as superior to Brieux, but Brieux is more brutally powerful, more personal and acrimonious. Brieux is, on the whole, logical, but there are times when his logic is ill-advised and one-sided, but Hervieu, by reason of his artistic reticence, is always just; Brieux is of the people, Hervieu is a little above. Perhaps that very passion for logical perfection in Hervieu lessens the value of his plays as human documents, and certainly the theme of *La Course du Flambeau* is more like a mathematical theorem than a series of incidents taken from life. The plays are often criticized for their almost too perfect balance, and their consequent lack of the "human" element, and it cannot be denied that in the play just mentioned, and in *Les Tenailles* and *La Loi de l'Homme*, Hervieu has overestimated the exigencies of his theme and assumed rather the rôle of scientific expositor than that of the critic of life. But in spite of an occasional too rigid adherence to the logic of his plot and a too great insistence on the formal precision of his ideas, Hervieu has accomplished more for the cause of his art than almost any other of his contemporaries. In Brunetière's Address on the Reception of Hervieu into the French Academy, he states that the plays of the young writer marked an epoch in the contemporaneous theater, bringing once more true tragedy in modern guise to the stage of to-day. And it is for this reason, as well as because of the intrinsic value of the plays that Hervieu will be re-

membered. Not content merely with the depiction of character in action, or with the consideration of present-day problems, he has returned to the eternal struggles, having root in all mankind: those between parent and child, love and duty, will-power and inclination. If he places his characters in a twentieth century environment, and sets them contending with modern conditions, it is only that he may bring his audience into closer sympathy with him than if he were to adopt the conventional magnificence and pomp of classical tragedy. "Nowadays," says M. Hervieu,* "we try to show how the struggle for existence bears down inexorably upon those who are imprudent, too weak to defend themselves, those whose passions are stronger than their will to resist them." And by way of illustration of this statement he has written at least two plays that may fairly be accounted the finest of modern tragedies, *Le Dédale* and *La Course du Flambeau*. In the former, the very essence of the tragedy is its inevitableness: in the heart of humanity is the love of parent for child, and external forces that tend to interfere with this deeply-imbedded instinct are bound to fail. In the latter, the element of fate is no less predominant; here the love of mother for daughter drives a woman to kill in turn her own mother; the play ends with the words, "For my daughter I have killed my mother."

Of the remaining plays, *Les Tenailles*, *L'Énigme*, *Le Réveil*, and *Connais-toi* are the most important; *La Loi de l'Homme* and *Les Paroles*

* Quoted, in *Le Théâtre et les Mœurs*, p. 180, Brisson, Flammarion (Paris).

Restent are early works of only relative merit; *Point de Lendemain*, merely an adaptation, *Théroigne de Méricourt* a historical drama, and *Modestie* a delightful trifle. Considering the plays in chronological order, and omitting *Point de Lendemain*, his first play, we come to *Les Paroles Restent*.

It is not of prime importance, though the choice of theme is significant: a man starts a slanderous story about a young lady which, it turns out, is untrue. He falls in love with her, and confesses that he started the story; she leaves him. There is a duel, the man is killed, hearing, just before his death the echo of his story: "Words remain." The impossibility of escape from the consequences of wrong-doing is a subject of true tragedy; it is a theme that Hervieu worked out later on a larger scale.

Les Tenailles, a more mature piece of work, is the story of a woman who, having ceased to love her husband, tells him she is in love with another man and wishes to go away with him. The husband, who retains as little love for his wife as she for him, refuses to let her go; "the wife is prisoner to the husband." At the end of ten years, after the birth of a child, a dispute arises over its education; in the heat of the argument, the woman tells her husband that the child is hers by the man she loved. The husband is now willing to grant his wife the divorce for which she asked years ago, but this time she refuses: she must have protection for herself and child. She cannot leave. "They must go hand in hand manacled to the end, let the nippers gall as they will. There is the

child. Its future is at stake."—"We are only two wretched people," says the wife, "and misery knows only equals." A greater sureness of touch and finer insight into human character enter into the composition of this play than into the preceding.

La Loi de l'Homme is an attack upon man-made laws; those articles in the Code that accord the right to the father, rather than the mother, to consent to the marriage of the child, and that fail to place man and wife on an equal legal footing in the matter of infidelity, are the butt of Hervieu's feminist and acrimonious play.

L'Énigme is chiefly interesting because it violates one of the supposedly inviolable laws of dramatic technique: Never keep a secret from the audience. One of two sisters-in-law is unfaithful to her husband. Which? That is the enigma that is not solved until the end of the play. With the utmost skill the author contrives to keep his audience in suspense, and in this he succeeds, with the result, however, that the interest of the play is almost entirely in the effort to solve the riddle which is, after all, of very little importance.

Théroigne de Méricourt, Hervieu's only attempt in the field of historical drama, was highly successful; by reason of its character portrayal, its vividness and power, its dignity, and the excellence of its literary style, it ranks as one of the best modern plays of its kind. Of the next play, *Le Dédale*, I shall speak later.

Le Réveil is perhaps the most abstract and "intellectual" of all the Hervieu plays, because of the extreme subtlety of its theme: "There are certain

crises in our lives," says Antoine Benoist,* "when it may be said that we are no longer ourselves; carried away either by enthusiasm or by a great wave of passion, we are capable of performing acts—good or evil—that, before or after, appear to us utterly out of keeping with our character. Such are the sudden and violent crises that ordinarily serve as subjects for the writer of dramas and tragedies. But suppose that the moment before the catastrophe, when two lovers are about to ruin their lives, a sudden light illumines the yawning abyss at their feet." Here then is the "awakening" that the author treats in *Le Réveil*. The woman who is willing to leave husband and child for the man she loves, suddenly comes to a full realization of her crime and, after thinking her lover dead, tells him, "No, I am no longer the woman for whom you were everything. I thought you were dead, and I saw that I must continue to live, if not for myself, at least for my husband and child."

Connais-toi marks a return to the earlier choice of theme: man is feeble, for he does not know himself; has he, therefore the right to judge others? As in *La Course du Flambeau* the central idea is epitomized in the final words of the play, "Who knows himself?" General de Sibéran, a man of rigid principles, infallible in his own estimation in questions of "honor" and morality, believes that a guest in his own home, a young lieutenant, is carrying on a clandestine love affair with another of his guests, Mme. Doncières; he insists that the lieu-

* *Le Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui*—première Série—Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie. (Paris, 1911.)

tenant leave at once for the wars. But he soon after learns that his own son is the guilty one; the son, however, is not sent off. Doncières, the husband of the woman, asks the general's advice, and determines to divorce his wife. After he leaves to arrange matters with his lawyer, the general surprises his own wife in the arms of the lieutenant. This blow paralyzes him and his principles; he can only forgive and ask, "Who knows himself?"

Hervieu's latest play, *Bagatelle* (October, 1912), is a comedy of manners. According to the French critics, it was well received at the Comédie, and deservedly so, for it marks a distinct step in advance. René Doumic writes:* "This comedy is really profound. It does credit to the author as dramatist and moralist. The painter of manners presenting in so modern and unmistakable a way the elegant society in which Mme. Orlonia moves, leaves us no illusions on the absolute depravity of certain circles in the highest ranks of contemporaneous society. . . . In my opinion, this is the last word on the subject . . . the reflection of human life itself. . . . For the first time he has depicted, in all its simplicity and chastity, the type of the pure woman."

Le Dédale is Hervieu's masterpiece. Its only acknowledged rivals, *Les Tenailles* and *La Course du Flambeau*, are, in the first instance, devoid of nobility as to the men and women portrayed and, in the second, marred by a too strict adherence to the logical demands of the theme. *Le Dédale* has at least two admirable and therefore truly pitiable and tragic figures, Marianne and Guillaume Le Breuil,

* In *L'Illustration*, January 25, 1913.

and the theme is allowed to develop through the human agency of the unfortunate characters, and not through the incorrigible demands of the dramatist. In no other play has Hervieu attained and preserved so great a height of sympathetic and passionate emotional power, nor exposed the relentless working-out of human motives struggling with forces greater than themselves; nowhere else has he sustained his interest and developed his story simultaneously, with so sure a hand. Faults the play has, faults of style—of which more will be said later—and faults of technique, while the dénouement has been in nearly every criticism of the play severely censured. Hervieu has declared himself against the expedient of suicide as a means of ending plays, and in the case of the present play, he seems to have acted contrary to his own teaching. He says,* “I have always avoided arbitrarily happy endings (the punishment of vice and the reward of virtue) and opportune deaths, whereby in the last act those who are in the way are fortunately disposed of, thereby employing the death of others as a solution for the problems of life.” After this affirmation, it is impossible to conceive of Hervieu so contradicting himself as to use the suicide-murder of Max and Guillaume as a facile expedient to rid himself of “those who are in the way;” his reasons must have been deeper. Consider Marianne’s position: if she dies, the child remains, and also the two husbands; if Guillaume dies, she is at the mercy of Max, against whom her innate modesty rebels; if Max dies, it must be

* Quoted, page 190, in *Le Théâtre et les Mœurs*, Brissou.

by Guillaume's hand—but then Guillaume would remain, with his crime and Marianne's infidelity to keep them apart. What remains? Both must die, for the good of Marianne and for the good of the child. This is the natural, the inevitable solution of the situation. Hervieu was therefore forced to it. And yet it seems unsatisfactory, especially, as M. Brisson points out,* as the catastrophe is dependent on Guillaume's superior physical strength, for what if Max had been the stronger? This is the only serious criticism that can justly be made against the play; for the rest, it is gripping, logical, and true; it is, as Mr. Huneker says, "a great section of throbbing, real life."

A word on the literary style of the play, and the difficulty in translating it, may not here be out of place. Brunetière called Hervieu a "difficult author," referring to his compact and unconventional manner of expression. In the earlier works, this "difficulty" amounted at times to annoying mannerism, and in *Le Dédale* there are many unnecessarily involved speeches, which would be utterly impossible in a literal or even fairly close translation. It has therefore been thought advisable to preserve in these cases the spirit and modify to a considerable extent the actual form; nothing of the author's idea has been omitted, merely an English equivalent has been sought in place of what would otherwise be a lifeless imitation. The present translation is intended for those who wish to know the play as a piece of dramatic literature, and as a true type of modern tragedy.

B. H. C.

* Page 190, in *Le Théâtre et les Mœurs*, Brisson.

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THE LABYRINTH

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS, IN PROSE, PRODUCED
FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE THÉÂTRE
FRANÇAIS, DECEMBER 19, 1903

PERSONS REPRESENTED: THE ORIGINAL CAST

Mm.

Max de Pogis.....	LE BARGY
Guillaume Le Breuil.....	PAUL MOUNET
Vilard-Duval	LOUIS DELAUNAY
Hubert de Saint-Éric.....	HENRY MAYER
The Doctor.....	SIBLOT
A Young Peasant.....	ANDRÉ BRUNOT

Mmes.

Marianne	BARTET
Mme. Vilard-Duval.....	PIERSON
Mme. de Pogis.....	RENÉE DU MINIL
Paulette	LECONTE
Little Louis	FLEURY

A valet, a footman, a chambermaid.

Act I. Home of Vilard-Duval.

Act II. Home of Hubert de Saint-Éric.

Act III. The Château of Max de Pogis.

Act IV. Same as Act I.

Act V. Terrace at home of Marianne.

All the above are in the French provinces.

TIME: The present.

The Labyrinth

ACT I

A drawing-room, with rich furnishings of a solid bourgeois family. A door at the back. A door to the left, down stage; another, half-way up stage to the left.

Discover VILARD-DUVAL.

SERVANT

[*Announcing.*] M. Le Breuil.

VILARD-DUVAL

Show him in, and let my daughter know. [*The SERVANT goes out and LE BREUIL enters.*] Come in, my dear Guillaume.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Don't keep me in suspense, M. Vilard-Duval. Tell me at once.

VILARD-DUVAL

Very well! My wife refuses to give her consent.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I didn't think that was possible. However, you had warned me.

VILARD-DUVAL

You know very well that this refusal casts no reflection on your character. My wife esteems you as the worthy son of one of my old legal friends. She respects you for that greatness of spirit which your enterprises, your struggles with Nature have given you. In short, she says that she couldn't wish for a better son-in-law, if Marianne were a widow. But she is only divorced. What her mother refuses to recognize is a marriage without the sanction of the Church.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

If your wife does not believe in divorce, why did she allow her daughter to get one?

VILARD-DUVAL

You don't seem to know the state of affairs—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I was in Australia at the time. Since I returned, and have been received into the family circle again, my attitude has been such as to prevent gossip, and out of regard for your feelings I have asked no questions.

VILARD-DUVAL

In short, here is the story. M. de Pogis, after Marianne had absolute proof of his infidelity, eloped with his accomplice, a friend of Marianne. I persuaded my daughter to ask for a separation, so that the runaway husband forfeited his right to come back and carry off the child, his and Marianne's. Three years later, M. de Pogis returned

to ask that the separation be changed to divorce. You can believe that my wife opposed this. She made Marianne appeal as often as she was able, telling her continually that divorce was impious. Marianne also disliked the finality of such a step. My wife, ever holding out for the bonds of marriage, had not even then given up the hope of a reconciliation.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Was your daughter also hoping for that?

VILARD-DUVAL

How could we tell? She said nothing at all for so long after the shock! At any rate, after M. de Pogis gained absolute liberty, no one thought of his returning here. He married some months ago, thereby giving his mistress the same name under which Marianne was living in our home. I shall say nothing more about that. I went into detail only to show you that my wife would never agree with us on this question of divorce. And I doubt if she ever will. You know, of course, that she was born of a different race from mine. She was educated at a convent in company with girls of noble birth. It seemed that we were incompatible in every respect. She was poor; I was a plebeian. But love came and made us equals.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Nevertheless, you didn't have to give up your own ideas. At any rate, you are not prejudiced against divorce, are you?

VILARD-DUVAL

I? Well, I tried during my career as a magistrate to command respect for the law. I have always treated those who observed it as good citizens; the others I condemned. Now that a question arises in my own home, of procedure sanctioned by the law, I should be giving the lie to my past life if I told my daughter, "Divorce is legal, but your country's laws mean nothing!"

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Good!—May I count on you to use your influence with your wife and daughter as much as possible?

VILARD-DUVAL

You may. It has been my earnest endeavor to provide for Marianne a husband of your force of character. When we old people, my wife and I, are gone, I want to be sure that my daughter will not be unprovided for in the world with her little boy, who may perhaps have inherited his father's quick temper. Marianne, who has not yet interfered, knows from me of my attempt last night. You can question her, and find what would be the best plan for her to adopt. No matter what she decides concerning her mother, I shall never take sides against Marianne.—Here she is.

MARIANNE

[*Entering through the left door, half-way down stage.*] Good morning, Guillaume.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

My dear Marianne!

VILARD-DUVAL

I have told him.

MARIANNE

Oh!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Yes.

VILARD-DUVAL

I am going to leave you to discuss it together with perfect frankness. I'll be writing, in my room. [*To GUILLAUME.*] Don't go without speaking to me again.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

All right. See you soon.

[*VILARD-DUVAL goes out through the door, left, down stage.*]

MARIANNE

Are you unhappy?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

No. I can't yet believe that I have lost you.

MARIANNE

What do you want me to do?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

You know I have a simple way of coming to the point at once. I learned that from my life among the savages. Don't be surprised at the question I am going to ask.

MARIANNE

What is it?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Marianne, I love you, you have accepted me; you are free, we have the approval of the head of your family. Tell me, will you let this scruple—which has come on us like a bolt from the blue—stand in the way of so much that is right?

MARIANNE

Oh, my dear, you don't ask me to break with my mother?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Yes; I was carried away by my love for you. Perhaps I overestimated your affection for me.

MARIANNE

Why are you so bitter and reproachful? When you proposed to me I accepted your offer with gratitude, with tenderness, but at the same time I warned you that you were getting a woman who had left her blind passions and eager enthusiasm by the wayside, on the thorny brambles—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

That is true. You promised me only faithful devotion.

MARIANNE

I am thankful to you for having restored to me as much as my heart can hold, now. I had come

to the conclusion that except in educating my son, I should never be happy again. You soon persuaded me that I could be so, in making you happy. And that is not all, for your attentions aroused in me again all my woman's pride, those little vanities dear to a woman which I thought had been crushed out of me. With you near me, I began to take greater care of my thoughts and how I expressed them to you. The sweet anxiety of waiting for you, the joy of having you here, your tender words and gentle care, have become every day like flowers, again smelling sweet through these hours of my life.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Marianne!

MARIANNE

Isn't that true devotion? Something higher, more precious?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I know I'm ungrateful, unjust, that I ask too much! But it is because I adore you with all the passion of first love! Before I came near you, I never imagined it possible to concentrate on one being alone all one's dreams and desires, all one's dearest hopes and deepest need for sacrifice! Only after I came to know you could I understand what infinite subtlety, what chaste refinements make up what is worthy to be called Woman! You have made me realize my dignity as a man. To you I owe all that is purest in me for having made me feel that respect could equal desire.

MARIANNE

What joy you give me, when you speak so generously! I—I hardly know what to answer! When I try to tell you what I feel, I can only think of commonplaces.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I could easily be content with commonplaces, as you call them, if we were married. I should not mind it if your lips never uttered fine speeches, if only those lips were mine. In our present difficulty, I am afraid to gauge by what you say how little you care for me! Since you don't want to disobey your mother, my only chance is in her giving in to your entreaties. And I fear you will not show the anguish, the anxiety, the sorrow, necessary for that! You will not be able to summon up those supplications and yearnings that I can hardly keep from uttering, I who love you, I who suffer for you—

MARIANNE

You know, Guillaume, I am deeply moved to see you like this. I appreciate infinitely your feelings for me. If you imagine that I'm not ready to shed tears for you, prove that you can hold it against me, that you can deprive me of your considerateness for me, of your comradeship. It's not you who threaten this, and yet you see I am crying!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

My dearest love, don't give me time to ask your forgiveness. Go at once, while you are suffering from my rudeness, while your heart is full, throw yourself at your mother's feet—

MARIANNE

What? At once?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Tell her that you refuse to make me miserable. Show her in your eyes that you have not the courage!

MARIANNE

Please, give me time to take hold of myself, and get ready for so terrible an ordeal!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

How soon you recover your prudence and cold commonsense! My wretched love can find no way to inspire you. [*The doorbell rings.*] Can nothing stir up in you one of those waves of passion that sweeps all before it?

PAULETTE

[*Entering through the door at the back.*] Am I intruding?

MARIANNE

Paulette! [*To GUILLAUME.*] Do you know my cousin, Madame de Saint-Éric?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Bowing.*] Certainly.

MARIANNE

[*To PAULETTE.*] When did you get back?

PAULETTE

I want to tell you about that.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I'll go—

MARIANNE

[*To GUILLAUME.*] You owe a visit to my father.
You will come back through here, won't you?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Certainly, with pleasure! I shall be back soon.
[*He goes out, down left.*]

MARIANNE

I didn't think you were coming back for another month.

PAULETTE

But I did, thank heaven!

MARIANNE

Don't you like the country?

PAULETTE

When you have a country place, you must visit it from time to time.

MARIANNE

In former years, you took so much pleasure in being alone with your family down there—

PAULETTE

[*Changing the subject.*] How is your little Louis getting on?

MARIANNE

Beautifully. And your boy?

PAULETTE

Very well, thanks. It's nice, isn't it, that our boys are the same age! Ten years! Just think how often people have changed their style of coiffure, their faces, and their characters, in that time!

MARIANNE

Did your husband come back with you?

PAULETTE

Of course. He will call on you to-day. I arranged to get here before he did; I wanted to tell you something for his benefit.

MARIANNE

What is it?

PAULETTE

In spite of the fact that you and I are such good friends, I find it very hard to explain. But circumstances have forced me to do so.

MARIANNE

Well, come now, what is it?

PAULETTE

Hubert and I arrived from La Charmeraye the day before yesterday. To account for my first day's time after our return, I told him that I spent yesterday shopping with you.

MARIANNE

Oh, Paulette! What am I to think of that?

PAULETTE

Don't trouble to go any deeper. All you have to do is corroborate my statement, if necessary.

MARIANNE

Did he question you, then? Did Hubert suspect you?

PAULETTE

No! I am the one who suffers when I come in and don't tell him where I have been, whom I saw, and what I did—

MARIANNE

There's a well-informed husband for you! Nevertheless, you shouldn't have used my name or have dragged me into this affair.

PAULETTE

How could I foresee that Hubert would become so polite all of a sudden, and change all his habits! Whenever he returns to Paris, he invariably lets some time pass before he comes to see you. If that much time had elapsed, my fabrication would have become ancient history. I should have had no fear of his alluding to it, and I should not have been embarrassed by telling you.

MARIANNE

But see what complications you might involve me in! Yesterday, I stayed with my mother all afternoon. Do you want to involve her? For my part, I tell you I should be very careful not to do that, knowing, as I do, her rigid principles on the subject of marriage.

PAULETTE

Let us tell her that I didn't want to let my husband know of a visit I made to my relatives, that he would have objected to. What more natural than a quarrel between our families?

MARIANNE

[*Ring* for a SERVANT.] All right! Let us start to work. [*To the SERVANT, who enters.*] Ask my mother whether she will receive her niece, Mme. de Saint-Éric?

SERVANT

Mme. Vilard-Duval has gone out.

MARIANNE

Without letting me know?

SERVANT

While M. Le Breuil was here, she told me not to trouble Madame, and that she was taking Louis out for a walk.

MARIANNE

Very well. [*The SERVANT goes out.*]

PAULETTE

What luck!

MARIANNE

Yes, and if my mother doesn't return too soon, the matter will be much simplified. But I must accustom myself to playing a part that is more disagreeable to me than I can tell.

PAULETTE

I can see that in the way you say it.

MARIANNE

Then, too, my dear, knowing each other as long as we have, you ought to understand how I object to compromise, and how I detest lying!

PAULETTE

Perhaps I had grounds for believing you weren't so intolerant any longer—

MARIANNE

What grounds?

PAULETTE

Don't force me to explain.

MARIANNE

Oh, speak plainly, you have insinuated something—now explain!

PAULETTE

This handsome fellow I see coming out of here—

MARIANNE

Guillaume?

PAULETTE

Yes, M. Le Breuil.

MARIANNE

Well?

PAULETTE

Well, there you are: that's all.

MARIANNE

Are you suggesting that our affection is anything but honorable?

PAULETTE

For a year now, M. Le Breuil has been in constant attendance on you. It's clear as day that he adores you. You accept his attentions with evident pleasure. Even after that, I should not have thought anything about it myself, but when people came to me and began talking—

MARIANNE

But you have only just arrived. Did you bring this story about me from the country? Whom did you get it from?

PAULETTE

Not from your husband—from Max, I mean. We are no longer on speaking terms, you know, with M. de Pogis. Hubert and he merely bow when they meet, but that's unavoidable among such close neighbors—

MARIANNE

And what about her? Have you met her recently?

PAULETTE

I had a look at her once when she didn't know I was looking. She's thinner, her eyes were more hollow, but they were only the more fascinating—

MARIANNE

[*Nervously.*] Don't talk about that creature! Who was it who told you about me?

PAULETTE

Max's mother, I have not broken with her. She is not in the least to blame; and I know she is very unhappy because of her son's behavior to you.

MARIANNE

Then why does she start a scandal about me?

PAULETTE

Poor woman, she tried to keep from passing judgment on you. In the interest of her grandson, as well as in your own, she asked me to put you on your guard against the story. She advised this with the best intentions.

MARIANNE

That doesn't matter. This is a splendid warning for me. It is time I stopped this talk, by making a sacrifice that I see must be made. Do you know who slandered me to Mme. de Pogis?

PAULETTE

I had the idea that it was her new daughter-in-law. She did it as much for her own advantage as to injure you.

MARIANNE

And what about Max? What was his attitude?

PAULETTE

His mother told me he knew nothing about it.

MARIANNE

Nonsense! The woman who has robbed me of him, has done this to degrade me in his eyes.

PAULETTE

She is probably not so foolish as to remind your former husband of you in this way.

MARIANNE

What do you mean?

PAULETTE

It seems that a man's thoughts return to the woman he can no longer dispose of, the moment he thinks of her as in the arms of another man.

MARIANNE

Yes, novels and plays have been written about that. Do you think that if Max learned I was in love with someone, he would feel regret, he would want me again?

PAULETTE

Through sheer vexation, perverseness, yes—it's quite probable.

MARIANNE

And you believe that merely by becoming the wife of another man, I should be causing him some—oh, some feeling of pain, of remorse?

PAULETTE

Oh, what questions you're asking! Heavens, I can't tell you anything positive! You once loved Max so deeply that he would be fool enough to believe what people said: that you were quite consoled for his loss. I can't imagine his admitting that you had found someone else to take his place.

MARIANNE

I can give him an unquestioned proof of that.

PAULETTE

How?

MARIANNE

By marrying again.

PAULETTE

You're not serious?

MARIANNE

I was never more so. I am not M. Le Breuil's mistress, I am his fiancée. It is quite possible that I shall marry him in the near future.

PAULETTE

Oh, Marianne! In our set a woman may get a divorce, but she cannot profit by it to the extent of remarrying. You would be encouraging public immorality!

MARIANNE

In what way?

PAULETTE

How do I know? We have not yet reached the point where we admit of the possibility of a woman's first husband meeting her second. Think of her own situation—between those two men!

MARIANNE

Do you consider that between the husband and the lover any more decent?

PAULETTE

That is an old situation, and public opinion has had time to become used to it.

MARIANNE

In the light of your prejudices and what you tolerate, I am getting to think better of what you refuse to tolerate.

PAULETTE

You don't seem to want to understand what society is shocked about. It is the official recognition that a woman has nothing sacred from both these men, who actually exist at the same time. Now a married woman who has a lover conceals the fact out of regard for public decency; society is not let into the secret. The transaction is not written down in the public records, it is unknown—

MARIANNE

Oh-h!

PAULETTE

And if it is suspected, no one has the right to be assured—

MARIANNE

Indeed!

PAULETTE

If one's suspicions are justified, for instance, if the truth has been confided to him, it is his duty to forget.

MARIANNE

But, you little wretch! You are perfectly aware, you can't forget they are two real living beings, a blot on your conscience and a shame to yourself. And yet you talk forever about other people's morals! Have you any of your own? Is the way in which a divorced woman like me becomes, in the public records, the wife of two men—after the lapse of a number of years—to be compared with that of belonging to them alternately—in the closest intimacy? No, you see, if I am to sympathize with you a little, I must consider the dangers to which you are exposed. The courage that this gives me alone helps me to bear the double disgrace of adultery: a husband deceived, and a lover!

PAULETTE

[*Pleading.*] Please! Don't say any more!
[*The door-bell rings.*]

MARIANNE

Take care! Here is Hubert!

PAULETTE

Heavens, send him away at once!

MARIANNE

[*To HUBERT, who enters at the back.*] How are you?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

I wanted to come and see you; I've just returned and I'm so busy I have scarcely a minute to myself.

MARIANNE

In that case I shan't ask you to sit down.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Now that's not nice of you!

MARIANNE

Now, really, Hubert—

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

No, it isn't. You just want to get rid of me, provided I leave my wife with you. Do you know how late you kept her yesterday?

MARIANNE

[*With perfect frankness.*] No.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

So late that my dinner had time to get cold.

PAULETTE

Now, Hubert, don't start that over again!—

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

It was half past eight.

MARIANNE

[*Ambiguously.*] It was so long since we'd seen each other!

PAULETTE

[*To HUBERT.*] Since you're in a hurry, you may go in the carriage. I'll set you down wherever you like. [*She goes to the door at the back.*] Come along with me.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*To PAULETTE.*] One moment. I want to tell our cousin how much she has improved this summer. [*To MARIANNE.*] You never looked more fascinating in your life!

MARIANNE

I believe that!

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

It's a fact, my dear, every time I see you, I am furious at the thought of this Pogis deserting you. Of course, it's all right for a husband to have a good time so long as he isn't found out—

MARIANNE

So you think that's right?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

I make an exception in the case of Paulette's husband!

MARIANNE

Ah! Just in time!

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

But it is inexcusable for a man to throw over a woman like you, out of sheer frivolity—

PAULETTE

Everybody agrees to that; don't rub it in. Come!

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*Sitting down.*] Oh, I have my own ideas on that subject. I have often regretted your retirement from society; it seems too bad to let all your charms go to waste—

MARIANNE

You've been gallant enough to-day. Suppose you stop now.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

No—no. Believe me, that fool Max would eat his heart out if he saw you go into society again—

PAULETTE

[*Impatiently.*] Oh, it would be fine! Come!

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*More and more at home.*] I'm just thinking! What a face! I don't think I could help whispering in his ear, "Aha! the woman you left—well, see how everybody wants her! Look at this fellow! Look at him!"—

PAULETTE

Will he ever stop?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

But then Max would not need any other influence to get angry at your success. He'd know very well, all by himself how to rage about in truly appropriate style!

PAULETTE

[*Urgently.*] You old gossip, aren't you ever coming?

MARIANNE

Don't you hear your wife champing the bit?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*Rising at last.*] Honestly, haven't you ever been tempted to avenge yourself that way?

MARIANNE

Never until to-day.

PAULETTE

[*Begging and scolding.*] Hubert!

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Think about it.

MARIANNE

I am thinking about it.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Good! We'll talk about it again. May I pay my compliments to your mother?

MARIANNE

She is out.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

May I at least see your father?

PAULETTE

He is busy. Come, now.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Then I'll be back.

PAULETTE

[*Aside.*] Oh!

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*Seeing MME. VILARD-DUVAL enter through the upper door at the left.*] What were you telling me? You are here, then, aunt?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

I just came in. What a pleasant surprise to find you both here! I didn't know you were back.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

How's that? Paulette was with your daughter all day yesterday.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Yesterday? What is this?

PAULETTE

[*To MME. VILARD-DUVAL.*] If Marianne told you nothing about it, aunt, it's my fault.—I came back from the country in such a hurry to see the dressmakers and the milliners—and I carried off your daughter without asking to see you. [*To*

HUBERT.] And when I saw how rude I'd been, I could do only one thing: beg Marianne not to tell my aunt of my return.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*To PAULETTE.*] This isn't what you told me.

MARIANNE

[*To HUBERT.*] What was the use?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*Pretending not to care.*] None, none whatever.

PAULETTE

[*To MME. VILARD-DUVAL, quickly and aside, while her husband, with his back turned, walks up and down, pulling at his mustache.*] Forgive me, aunt!

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*Turning to MARIANNE, with a forced smile.*] You can easily understand, I am a little surprised.—It is rather unusual—?

MARIANNE

[*Hiding her embarrassment as she hastens to reply.*] Why, no, I—

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*Cutting MARIANNE short and taking charge of the matter herself.—To HUBERT.*] You'll soon understand how simple it all is. [*HUBERT moves toward her, expressing his complete confidence in her.—To PAULETTE.*] My daughter has no secrets from me. I know how she occupied every moment

of her time yesterday. And since she didn't want to make you feel bad for neglecting me, we agreed that I should pretend to be surprised when at last you were kind enough to come and see me—

PAULETTE

[*Embarrassed.*] Oh, aunt—

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

—[*To HUBERT.*] I've just been playing my part.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*Obviously relieved.*] Good! Just think, for a moment—[*He stops, unwilling to admit that he came near thinking his wife had been unfaithful.*] Well, we're losing time, talking this way. [*Looking at his watch.*] I forgot, I have an engagement at the club. I'm very sorry to leave you, aunt. [*He kisses MME. VILARD-DUVAL's hand. To MARIANNE, who accompanies him to the door at the back.*] Good-bye. [*To his wife.*] Come, Paulette, take me along.

PAULETTE

[*To MME. VILARD-DUVAL.*] I want to ask your pardon for—

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Trot along with your husband. You may call on me again soon. You owe me a visit.

[*HUBERT and PAULETTE go out.*]

You're surprised at your mother? You didn't think she had such deceits at hand? Well? Sud-

denly I saw that if I didn't say something I should perhaps be the cause of a ruined family. It was only common charity to act as I did.

MARIANNE

Dearest mother, you are better than I am; I should have been unequal to the task from sheer lack of physical strength. To stand up and lie like that! You have been goodness itself, it's almost a fault with you. Now at last I feel encouraged to come up for judgment before you, even though you will think my intentions, as I explained them to you, very sinful.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Oh, no, when the evil is done, I can only pity and hope the evil-doers will repent. But if the evil is not yet committed, I have only one thought: to prevent it.

MARIANNE

How strict your principles become the moment you realize that my fate is in the balance!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You are right. When it is a question of you, my conscience becomes more acute; *you* are my daughter.

MARIANNE

Yes, I am your daughter, and as such I implore you to alter your decision, which is opposed by father and also by me—

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Your father! Why should he approve your marriage with M. Le Breuil? He merely cites a law made by men, a law which is only temporary, which did not exist when I married him, and which perhaps will cease to exist by the time you are ready to marry. My child, I put my faith in everlasting laws, and I am opposing you in the name of the Eternal Wisdom. A marriage which is consecrated before God, endures till either the husband or the wife dies. My religion forbids you to remarry.

MARIANNE

Consider, mother; my unhappy life, instead of making me surer of my religion, has forced me to doubt. Are you sure you have the moral right to sacrifice me to your religious scruples, that belong to you only, and for me are not so binding? Don't you see that you are trying to offer up a human sacrifice of what youth and life I still have?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You cannot make me admit so readily that I am so inhuman a mother. Before you can truthfully say I have sacrificed you, you must prove that you cannot exist without M. Le Breuil, that you love him desperately!

MARIANNE

You know that I am above all sincere. I can't act a part. I can't wear a mask of sentiment and exaggerate before you or Guillaume. I love him as deeply as I am capable of loving. I love

him with all that is best in me, and in becoming his wife I have too many beautiful thoughts of him, our affection is too sacred to me—to make me believe that I am doing anything wicked. I feel that if there was ever anything evil in my life it was only that former marriage which you are pleased to consider always as “consecrated.”

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You must not say that!

MARIANNE

Yes, I must! It is with Max that I made the mistakes of which I am still ashamed. He was so unworthy!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

My child! You must not talk like that!

MARIANNE

Yes, I have known sin, immorality, in the heat of my frantic passion for Max, and I have known them in the despicable hope of his taking me back. I have known them in all the memories Max left me, good or bad!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

My poor child! Listen to her talk about Max! See, I understand you, you aren't cured yet of your love for him.

MARIANNE

What? You have no right to think that. I hate, I despise him, as the man who ruined my life!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

He was undoubtedly guilty; I should never dream of defending him. But I don't want you to excite yourself for nothing, to arouse worse and bitter thoughts of him. I am sure M. de Pogis is repentant for what he has done. The people who have met him say that he goes about with a down-cast air, looking bad, like a man who had done something against his will.

MARIANNE

Nonsense! When his infidelity was no longer a matter of doubt, did he try to defend himself? To learn how I intended to dispose of him and myself? Do you remember? He deserted me—disappeared—

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Exactly—he didn't dare to come to you again. He acted like a crazy man. Since then, I have often thought that your separation was merely the result of a misunderstanding.

MARIANNE

A misunderstanding? I cannot believe that. It would have been worse still if I had been defeated merely through a mistake. Let's not talk about that, there's no use discussing it. Max will always remain a perfect stranger to me. He has erected between us the barrier of his new marriage, and everything invites me to pay him back in the same coin. The love of another man has been offered to me, a deep and sincere love, and my acceptance of that will show M. de Pogis that his desertion

has not altogether ruined my life. You see, it would be too absurd, too cruel, to refuse Guillaume; he is so generous, and he adores me. He has just asked me to make him happy, and obtain your consent to the marriage. And now you tell me, at this moment when I feel I cannot give him up, that I ought to carry back your answer to him, that we must break off our relations!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

It's not as bad as that, my dear. There can exist friendship and good feeling, and even devotion between you; that is quite honorable.

MARIANNE

You are mistaken. At this moment I am in a compromising position. Oh, yes, I am. Seeing how assiduous M. Le Breuil was to me, people don't think him merely a suitor; "A divorced woman thinking of taking a second husband? Nonsense." They have done me the honor of considering my attitude as strictly within the bounds of convention, but they say—they say that Guillaume is my lover.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Oh, Marianne! How awful!

MARIANNE

I am telling you simply what Paulette has just told me. After this, do you think we can continue to receive M. Le Breuil, as we have?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

No, my child, decidedly not.

MARIANNE

Consequently, you say that he must not come again except as your son-in-law—

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

I repeat: I shall never consent to that.

MARIANNE

Then must my best, my dearest friend, be shown the door?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

We shall have to handle the matter delicately with him. His respect for you will show him how necessary that will be.

MARIANNE

So that is the solution you propose, mother? So calmly and coolly? You think I ought to end my days like a little girl, become an old maid, be without a home of my own, while I see my friends living out their lives with those they love. And then see the man who broke up my home making another for himself! I see his accomplice at his side, that woman who has a past, and who has still a present and a future. I see all the other women with their husbands, some even with a husband and a lover! I see everyone enjoying his share of love! And I, if I dare to love I am slandered, I am prevented from showing my love, even from feeling it. I'm locked in a prison, bound, strapped hand and foot!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

How excited you are! I haven't seen you in such a state since the breaking-up of your home!

MARIANNE

I have been meek for too long! I have decided to give the lie at once to all the slander and gossip that has been said of me! Hitherto, it was mere talk, now it is downright libel. To-morrow, all those who are prejudiced will blame me, but I shan't care. If they have thought me Guillaume's mistress, I shall save my reputation in my own way and according to the law, by becoming his wife, legitimately, in the eyes of the world.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Marianne, is that a threat to disobey me?

MARIANNE

In taking so important a step, my father has promised to support me even if he should be the only one to stand by me, and yet he has the profoundest respect for your principles.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Oh! Very well! very well! Carry out together your plot against me.

MARIANNE

[*Retaining her.*] Dearest mother, don't judge me now by what you are, but by what I am. The only wrong I can see is in disobeying you—I see none whatever in remarrying. You have always

been the best of mothers to me. Consider now, isn't it your duty, your sacred duty, to prevent my doing this against your will? Leave me free to decide my own future, and let me do it without disobeying you.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

What can I say? I hardly know what—No, I cannot give up my religion.

MARIANNE

Mother!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

But I can never give you up. No matter what sin you commit you will always be my daughter.

[She turns toward the door half-way up stage to the left.]

MARIANNE

Oh, please, mother. Just one word more. Do not leave me. Don't go away like this. Speak to me, please. A few kind words—

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You may do as you like.

MARIANNE

Oh!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

I pray that God may not punish you.
[She goes out.]

MARIANNE

[To GUILLAUME, who enters through the door to the left.] Oh, you are here!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Stopping.*] Didn't you ask me to come back? What is the matter?

MARIANNE

Ask my father to come here. [*To herself.*] If I hesitate now, I shall never again have the courage.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*On the threshold, to VILARD-DUVAL.*] Your daughter is asking for you. [*Returning to MARIANNE.*] What is it?
[*VILARD-DUVAL has entered.*]

MARIANNE

[*To GUILLAUME.*] I will be your wife.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Oh! my dearest love!

VILARD-DUVAL

[*To MARIANNE.*] You have spoken to your mother? . What did she say?

MARIANNE.

She repulsed me—sent me back to you. Take me into your arms.

VILARD-DUVAL

My duty is a very painful one, between my wife and you. But I believe you are right. [*To GUILLAUME.*] From now on you are my son-in-law.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Thank you, thank you, with all my heart. Oh, Marianne, my life is yours!

ACT II

A drawing-room furnished in the modern style. At the right, two windows opening from the entresol, through which is seen the foliage of an avenue of trees. To the left, up-stage, a large vestibule connecting with the hall, serves as entrance. As the curtain rises, MARIANNE leaves the group which is in the vestibule. HUBERT follows her.

MARIANNE

[*Standing by a tea-tray, with coffee on it,—to HUBERT.*] Shall I help you?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Yes, indeed, since my wife has forgotten that she is hostess.

PAULETTE

[*Hearing this, and answering from a distance.*] We're talking; leave us alone.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*To MARIANNE.*] I hope you and Guillaume will pardon us for the wretched lunch we offered you. But you see, as we are leaving for the country this very evening, the house is all upset.

MARIANNE

Your hospitality has already exceeded the bounds of what one might expect. A little lunch was all that you intended; a lunch to which your little one invited mine before they separated for the summer. By the way, what became of them?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*Philosophically.*] They're probably ruining my billiard table.

MARIANNE

[*To GUILLAUME.*] Will you go and see what Louis is doing!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Answering from the other end of the room.*] I'm going, dearest.

PAULETTE

[*Following GUILLAUME.*] We'll bring you the news.

[*GUILLAUME and PAULETTE disappear.*]

MARIANNE

Are you glad to leave Paris?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

This year I am not glad, no—the way my vacation is going to be spent.

MARIANNE

What do you mean?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Well, while we are alone, I want to ask you a favor—it's about my wife—

MARIANNE

What's the matter?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

It's a rather delicate subject.

MARIANNE

Well, what is it?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Paulette's relations with me aren't any longer what they ought to be.

MARIANNE

[*Troubled.*] Where did you get that idea?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

I know whereof I speak.

MARIANNE

[*Prudently.*] Oh!

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Understand me clearly. It's all very well for me to be officially, according to the law and to all appearances, Paulette's husband; but she refuses to give me that impression.

MARIANNE

[*Assured.*] Ah!—And what grounds have you—?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Since I have asked you to be my legal adviser, I should conceal nothing from you, should I? It is to a certain extent my own fault. You know I'm light-hearted by nature. My associates at the club are good fellows,—like me. Sometimes I find myself dragged into one of those little parties where there are young ladies who are no less gay than I—

MARIANNE

Why, it's flat infidelity you're telling me about!

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Oh, no! I am merely telling you of an unhappy combination of circumstances. One day my wife was told of one of my little escapades—it was almost involuntary; I never gave it a second thought. She didn't give me a chance to defend myself, or make amends. Paulette tried to turn a simple farce into a tragedy. She made the most of that incident. She insisted on a separation that I now deeply regret. I'm all cut up. If I were conceited perhaps I should be flattered at having my wife prove to me by her deep concern for what I had done that she still loves me, even after so many years of married life.

MARIANNE

[*Good-naturedly.*] You see, she *is* giving you a proof—

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*Simply and sincerely.*] Yes, but I'm not conceited.

MARIANNE

My dear friend, what can I do, under the circumstances?

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Paulette has a great deal of confidence in your judgment. Assure her that my crime is not unpardonable. You know very well that at bottom, under my Parisian's mask of frivolity and idleness, I am a very devoted husband, that I would do anything for my wife or my children. When I leave her, I tell you I leave my whole affection. It's because I have too much happiness at home that sometimes, away from home, I want to have a little amusement, which is merely an overflow of happiness—

MARIANNE

Don't say any more; I understand; for some months you're going to be at a distance of five hours from this "superfluity of happiness." A wise man is speaking through your lips to-day, asking from the gods only what is needful.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Don't make game of me. Promise that when you're with my wife you'll put in a good word for me.

MARIANNE

I'll do my best.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Don't seem to be asking a favor. Make it appear a supreme desire on your part for harmony between your friends.

MARIANNE

I'll tell Paulette that it will be a favor and a pleasure for *me*.

PAULETTE

[*Returning with* GUILLAUME.] While you were so quiet here we were stopping a fight between the children.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

How was that?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*To* MARIANNE.] Your boy started pummeling Toto.

MARIANNE

Oh!

PAULETTE

Toto began it. He was teasing. He cheated—

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Loulou ought to have come and complained.

PAULETTE

Just what I told him. He said that in defending himself with his fists he was only practicing what Guillaume had taught him.

MARIANNE

The little liar!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

No, dear Marianne, Loulou never lies; he is truly your son. When my little friend, your son, and I are chatting together I merely inculcate certain principles, the result of which I admit has been unfortunate. On behalf of your cousins, I ask your forgiveness.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Oh, a few scratches and thumps!—Necessary for a growing boy! [*To PAULETTE.*] Look after Guillaume's coffee; I have to telephone. [*He goes out.*]

[*PAULETTE goes back to prepare a cup of coffee.*]

MARIANNE

[*Down-stage, with GUILLAUME.*] So you give my son lessons in war and bloodshed?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I told him that a boy ought to have something better to do than tell tales on his companions. I hold that if someone wrongs us the last method of gaining satisfaction is to apply to someone else. I tell you I don't want to see your boy become one of those puppets—of which our schools are turning out hundreds—which are worked only by the strings of convention and social usage. I tell him that he must be a free man later on, and must never hesitate to use force if his rights are threatened.

PAULETTE

Your coffee is ready.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Thank you.

[PAULETTE goes to the left, and with some books finishes packing a valise which lies open upon a chair. Then she touches the button of the electric bell.]

MARIANNE

Since you assume the responsibility of what the child has done, I have only you to scold—yes, scold! You're teaching my son the morality of an athlete; it isn't your own code of morals, it has nothing to do with you. I beg of you, don't build up a character in him from which he would be the first to suffer.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Marianne, have I made you angry?

MARIANNE

It's not your fault, my dear Guillaume; you can't possibly feel what I do for my little one! Every time he is concerned I am at once on my guard, fearful for the future.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

But have you any idea how fond I am of your little one!

MARIANNE

And he of you!

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*Re-entering.*] Come, Guillaume, you promised to take a look at the horses I'm thinking of buying. Hurry up and finish your coffee.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*To HUBERT.*] One moment! [*To MARIANNE.*] Tell me that you will have nothing more to do with me!

MARIANNE

Nothing more—ever.

PAULETTE

[*To the maid, for whom she rang.*] Get my hat and cloak.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*To PAULETTE.*] Have to go out?

PAULETTE

I have some errands to do that will take me all day.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

Always shopping! [*PAULETTE does not answer—He speaks to MARIANNE.*] The moment after she comes in, out she goes. Can't keep from doing it! Tell me what the devil is in the woman!

MARIANNE

I can't tell you.

HUBERT DE SAINT-ÉRIC

[*Aside to MARIANNE.*] Don't forget, now, what I asked you to do?

MARIANNE

I shall see to that. [*She shakes hands with him, and, with a significant smile, says:*] A pleasant summer!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*To PAULETTE.*] Well, good-bye!

PAULETTE

[*Sadly.*] Till November!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*With a tone of reassurance.*] It will soon be here. [*To MARIANNE.*] How I wish I did not have to leave you!

MARIANNE

I shall see you soon at the house. [GUILLAUME and HUBERT leave.] Have you a few moments?

PAULETTE

A quarter of an hour yet. Let's make use of the time. Doubtless you'd like to know what your husband wanted of me, while he was with me over there? He told me how sorry he was that your mother wouldn't consider him her son-in-law.

MARIANNE

Oh, yes, she calls him Monsieur. Poor dear mother! She tried as hard as she could to show that she had not changed toward me. But she cannot bear to hear me say the nice things about Guillaume that I want to tell. Between her and me there is a silent grief.

PAULETTE

Your husband spoke to me about you also. And how warmly! How simply! After two years of married life, don't such extravagances surprise you?

MARIANNE

Guillaume is one of those whose love grows where once it has taken root. I'm not thinking whether I'm surprised or not; I feel that it is strong and good, like Nature itself.

PAULETTE

Guillaume is just the husband for you! Fortune owed you that compensation. And this last year we have had occasion to see that there is a Justice to deal retribution as well!

MARIANNE

It seems so!

PAULETTE

What a blow for Max, to lose the woman whom he placed above everything else in the world! After having so frantically mourned for you, here he is to-day a widower again! At thirty-eight it is his fate to remain alone through life! For he is hardly allowed to see your son, is he; or has he a partial guardianship?

MARIANNE

I was forced to have Louis taken two afternoons a week to the home of Mme. de Pogis, Max's mother. I shall grant nothing further.

PAULETTE

There wasn't talk of that, was there?

MARIANNE

Oh, yes. I have just been troubled with attempts in that direction. Mme. de Pogis wrote me two weeks ago, and again a week ago. I answered in a rather curt fashion which will, I imagine, cut short further correspondence. But let's talk about your affairs. Your husband has just been speaking of his trouble with you.

PAULETTE

Oh, he decided to tell—!

MARIANNE

I know you have imposed a penance on him.

PAULETTE

Did he pride himself on the reason?

MARIANNE

He confesses that he was just carried away. But if you go on much longer, you may lose him entirely.

PAULETTE

He may do whatever he likes, so long as he asks nothing of me!

MARIANNE

Don't you think you're holding your judgment against him too long? Please don't be angry at

what I'm going to remind you of: one day when it was absolutely necessary, more than two years ago, you confided to me that you yourself were not above reproach. We never referred to that subject again, and I should like to believe that that was only a moment of folly in your life. I speak of this in order to teach you a lesson in forgiveness, by which your husband may profit.

PAULETTE

I have not forgotten the incident, nor how you railed against women who are unfaithful.

MARIANNE

Yes, I remember. My opinions on that subject will never change; the idea of a woman sinking to such depths of ignominy—my flesh creeps! For my part, I prefer flight a thousand times, even death!

PAULETTE

Give me credit at least for having adopted the first pretext to have to do with only one man.

MARIANNE

But I never advised you to choose among lovers! You belong to your husband alone!

PAULETTE

Your instinct tells you that; and so does mine. And the kiss which my instinct condemns as the most impure is not the one forbidden by law; it is rather the kiss that is not wanted!

MARIANNE

I think so highly of a woman's modesty that I cannot conceive how a man can overcome it except by marriage, in which he promises his whole life and shares his name!

PAULETTE

But just think of the only too prosaic side of love!—A woman forgets all about it with her lover, while she is thrilled with fear and boldness, while he intoxicates her with declarations of love and appreciation—but a husband—who assumes that he has conquered you, once for all!

MARIANNE

Without that title, every man who comes near would seem like a madman, a satyr. But, through the magic of the words, "my husband," I feel that in the presence of the man to whom they refer I have no restriction, no individuality.

PAULETTE

I assure you I am on very friendly terms with my husband. But I cannot admit that my personal privacy should be of daily interest to him. No, you see, married life and its tacitly accepted conventions are what make human beings most like animals.

MARIANNE

What seems to bring us nearer the beasts is to ignore duty, to form more or less transitory alliances, to wish to be carried away by attentions, to

give ourselves up for glittering toys! It's clear that you and I feel quite differently about this matter; we can never agree.

PAULETTE

Who knows? We are women. We ought to be more alike than we imagine.

[*Enter a SERVANT.*]

What is it?

SERVANT

[*Giving her a letter.*] The gentleman is waiting.

PAULETTE

I seem to know that writing—[*Having torn open the letter.*] Oh, very well! [*To the SERVANT.*] Say that I shall answer. [*The SERVANT leaves.*] Mme. de Pogis, senior, asks to call.

MARIANNE

I thought she was on sufficiently good terms with you to call without asking permission.

PAULETTE

That is because she asks me to see your former husband at the same time.

MARIANNE

Him!

PAULETTE

They are both downstairs now.

MARIANNE

[*Frightened.*] Oh!

PAULETTE

They came to get me to negotiate about your boy.

MARIANNE

I said no, and no it is!

PAULETTE

Mme. de Pogis begs me for your own sake to intervene. Here it is; for your own sake.

MARIANNE

She's too kind!

PAULETTE

She is very scrupulous. If she is led to say that it is in your interest, you may be certain it is.

MARIANNE

But how? You frighten me!—Very well, let's find out at once what is behind this.

PAULETTE

Marianne, I must go. I cannot, just this moment, receive these visitors, when I could not afterward interrupt by leaving, and offend them.

MARIANNE

Well, when will you see them, if you are going away this morning? How can I possibly talk with you again, after they leave? You have accused me of being too much occupied with my child, and now you want me to keep him in mind indefinitely!

PAULETTE

Don't you see, my dear, I'm all excited? My next hour is not my own; I've promised it to some one, given it away! Ought I to torture him by making him wait, as well as by saying good-bye?

MARIANNE

My poor Paulette, I was selfish. But who isn't? Kiss me! Do what you have decided to, and let me be—write Mme. de Pogis to come up alone, and that I will see her.

PAULETTE

All right. Why shouldn't I?
[*She writes.*]

MARIANNE

I shall take matters in hand!

PAULETTE

[*To the SERVANT, for whom she has rung.*] Take this note. [*The SERVANT goes out.*] How pale you are! Come now, seeing this good lady again is nothing to be upset about!

MARIANNE

To think, too, that Max—who has been so far away for five years—is at this moment so near! If you didn't feel the way you do, I should have only to disappear, and he could come in! He would be speaking to you just as I am now!

PAULETTE

[*Who has gone to look out of the window.*] Do you want to see him?

MARIANNE

Not in the least!

PAULETTE

[*Still at the window.*] He's with his mother, in the carriage—on this floor we're almost on a level with them. Oh, their footman is giving them my letter. That handsome Max! He's not changed a bit—always charming. Now his mother's telling him something hurriedly. I suppose she is saying that you are here.

MARIANNE

What difference does that make to him?

PAULETTE

[*Retiring from the window.*] Oh! He just glanced up at this window!

MARIANNE

Did he see you?

PAULETTE

He had only time to see something white.

MARIANNE

Just so he doesn't flatter himself it was I!

PAULETTE

What difference could that make to you?

MARIANNE

[*Troubled.*] Oh, no difference. [*Perfunctorily.*] Really, none at all!

PAULETTE

Mme. de Pogis will be here in a moment. Since I scrawled an excuse to her, I'll leave—

MARIANNE

That's it, go. For the time being, let us not think of one another. We can send our love by letter.

PAULETTE

Au revoir!

[*She goes out.*]

MARIANNE

[*She is irresistibly drawn toward the window, looks out, and suddenly recoils.*] He looked up again!

MME. DE POGIS

[*Entering.*] You, my dear child!—You!

MARIANNE

I offered to receive you myself.

MME. DE POGIS

Marianne!

MARIANNE

Oh, Madame, let us spare your nerves and mine! Let us say only what is absolutely necessary.

MME. DE POGIS

Why are you hard on me, my dear? What have I done?

MARIANNE

You have come to dispute with me the possession of my boy.

MME. DE POGIS

I have come to try to dissuade you from getting into another unfortunate lawsuit with Max.

MARIANNE

Everything has been settled between M. de Pogis and me.

MME. DE POGIS

You are mistaken. The guardianship of the child, when awarded to only one parent, is an affair that is never settled.

MARIANNE

Have I not kept my part of the agreement?

MME. DE POGIS

No doubt! But now it is my son who deserves a better arrangement. He ought no longer to be deprived almost altogether of his rights as a father.

MARIANNE

I do not deny that. I shall find out whether through court after court I have to deal with the husband who was branded as a perjurer, with the father who was judged unworthy the name!

MME. DE POGIS

You are very hard on him! You are going too far! I have had many talks with my son; when he began to misbehave he treated the matter lightly, I can assure you, but when he was convinced by you that his conduct amounted to infidelity, he was uncertain how seriously you took the affair, and how ready you were to forgive him. And were you yourself sure of your own mind? You were both so young at the time—at an age when your characters and ideas were too unrelenting. If Max committed the worst excesses as a result, I might explain to you how in spite of himself, and by a series of fatal accidents—

MARIANNE

Don't bother. My mother, too, kept preaching to me about the possibility of a misunderstanding; I don't see the use in looking into it. You have come to start an argument for which I must have time to prepare. For the present, Madame, let the matter rest!

MME. DE POGIS

Great Heaven, don't send me off like this! You are sensible enough to see how the situation is changed. Sit down, listen to me! Now it is not with my son, but with you, that a stranger to the child has come to live; you have married again. Max is a widower; he considers himself now from a totally different point of view; he has been softened by misfortune. He considers that the home of the young Louis de Pogis should be no other than the hereditary abode of the de Pogis, with his father, Max de Pogis—at least as much as with M. Le Breuil!

MARIANNE

Oh, that is what he says!

MME. DE POGIS

I have not come here to attack you, any more than to defend him. I am equally sorry for you both; you are both parents of my grandson. You must not bring another scandal into the courts and soil his innocent name.

MARIANNE

Do you imagine I don't feel the same horror? But who is it who is threatening to drag to light again those wrongs and sufferings of the past? Is it I? Will it be my doing?

MME. DE POGIS

I tell you Max is forced to do this. The wretchedness of his life has made him harsh; but when he opened his heart to me and told me of his rights as a father, he was terribly sorry for what he had done. Even after your unforgiving answers he was always patient. Recently, everything went wrong, after Louis stopped coming. What happened? What did Max object to? He was at great pains to hide it from me, as when one's pride is hurt. And it was then that he returned to his lawyer, a man whose word is law, whose advice is absolutely authoritative.

MARIANNE

And what advice, please, did he offer this time?

MME. DE POGIS

He considers that from now on the circumstances in the case warrant an equal division in the guardianship of the child.

MARIANNE

Madame, you cannot make me believe that! You are threatening me!

MME. DE POGIS

I swear by my grandson that I am telling you the facts as I have them, as I believe them to be!

MARIANNE

I shall not doubt your sincerity, but you must have been led to exaggerate your chances. You must be mistaken—you must!

MME. DE POGIS

Max is never tired of saying that he is an outcast, that he has nothing to lose and everything to gain. And he is going ahead at once, unless you stop proceedings by your common-sense and generosity.

MARIANNE

[*After considerable hesitation.*] Well—let us say I consent to an arrangement, what will satisfy you?

MME. DE POGIS

Before deciding this, I had in vain advised my son to be very reasonable in his demands; I implored him!—You are dealing with a soul in agony. He will not rest satisfied until he has an equal share in the child.

MARIANNE

One week out of two! Six months out of the year! My little one, who has not been out of my sight since he was born! You couldn't take him away like that! I'd be only half a mother to him!—Oh, no, no! It's impossible!

MME. DE POGIS

Everything is possible, when you go to law! And if you will not listen to reason—well, we shall proceed at once. For a short time you will be in the turmoil of the courts, in the papers, while the lawyers will be brutally rending the tender flesh of the child of your former love!

MARIANNE

You, Madame, have been witness to all the evil that came from my love for your son. Are you not ashamed to help him in the wrong he wants to do me once again?

MME. DE POGIS

Marianne, I am now speaking for Max's wrongs. I just told you why my conscience forced me to take his side.

MARIANNE

No, Madame, you can find no justification for that! Can you forget that he left his child with me, as a sort of indemnity for the loneliness in which he left me! You speak of your conscience! Well, your conscience ought to rebel against the idea of the return of that same man to his victim, of his attempt to steal it back again!

MME. DE POGIS

He is my son, and he demands *his* son!

MARIANNE

And I am the woman you used to call daughter, and whom you never had cause to blame! And for the grandson I gave you, I nearly died in your arms when I brought him into the world! That child forever forms a link between you and me, a link of help!—Stop this terrible thing! Help me! Stand between me [*Pointing to the window below which is MAX*] and him!

MME. DE POGIS

[*Struck with an idea.*] Between you two? Perhaps—? Yes, if there is one voice that can influence the father in his demands, it is yours!

MARIANNE

How?—What is your idea? Do you want to have us meet?

MME. DE POGIS

You will not meet without causing my son a feeling of remorse, and yourself of compassion. That can have no other than a good effect on the future of your child.

MARIANNE

Oh, Madame, what are you trying to do?

MME. DE POGIS

I have seen a final means of preserving peace.—Are you ready to speak with him?

MARIANNE

Do you really wish it? Is it you who wish it?

MME. DE POGIS

[*Near the window.*] Give me a word, a sign,
and I'll call him.

MARIANNE

Call him!

MME. DE POGIS

[*Waving her handkerchief out of the window.*]
Max!

MARIANNE

No!—It's too ridiculous!

MME. DE POGIS

[*Still calling out of the window.*] Yes! Come!

MARIANNE

No, no!

MME. DE POGIS

[*Returning from the window.*] He is coming.

MARIANNE

[*Deeply moved.*] Oh!

MME. DE POGIS

He hesitated at first. He knew you were here,
that he was going to meet you.

MARIANNE

I shall never have the strength—!

MME. DE POGIS

For some days he has been very excited; he will probably try to play a part. If he seems bitter, it means that he is ill at ease. Don't get angry; be generous.

SERVANT

[*Announcing.*] M. de Pogis.

MME. DE POGIS

Come here, my dear. I have assumed the responsibility for this interview, as I have not succeeded in presenting your case myself.

MAX DE POGIS

[*Stopping.*] Oh!

MME. DE POGIS

Talk in a way that may possibly soften her.

MARIANNE

Oh, no, Madame, do not flatter yourself by thinking that I can be so easily influenced!

MAX DE POGIS

[*To MARIANNE.*] I thought it my duty to come when I was called. But if you are determined to see in me nothing but a guilty husband, I have no more to say. It would not become me to blame you for what you have made me suffer. I should be exceeding my rights if I tried to explain my misdeeds. I don't ask you to forget them; and as for me, I should never think of excusing myself.

MARIANNE

I consented to receive you, as the father of our child; you have nothing to say to me except as such. If you try to speak as anyone else, I shall not recognize you.

MAX DE POGIS

Very well. You will, I trust, allow me to speak to you as an equal. As to our son, I am ready to sacrifice anything for him—as you are, and as much as you.

MARIANNE

Since when? If you had always had a father's heart, you would never have left him, even if you had had to bear my presence.

MAX DE POGIS

It is true you were the best of mothers then, when I was hardly beginning to be a father. Do you blame me, or Nature? Mothers begin to love their children at the first indication that they are mothers, and their care is for a long time sufficient to guard the tiny being as it sleeps in the cradle. I never felt that I was a father, I never realized a father's duties, until I saw my son approaching adolescence. Now that he is no longer a child, I feel impelled to assure him, by my embrace, that I am with him, too, to guide him, to defend him against the surprises and dangers of life.

MARIANNE

I can complete his education without your assistance. You left me to do everything for him—even

what a father should do—from the day you decided that I should consider you as no longer existing.

MAX DE POGIS

The dead who never return are the only ones who leave their widows wholly alone. They should have, like me, something to say to those who are bringing up their child to love and reverence another father.

MME. DE POGIS

Oh, Max, be a little considerate!

MARIANNE

Yes, that reproach sounds strange coming from you!

MME. DE POGIS

[*To MARIANNE.*] Please—!

MARIANNE

What have I done, in marrying again, that you have not let me do, given me the right, the example, the very proof that it was nothing to you? It would be wiser, I think, not to drag in a third person in connection with me or you—!

MAX DE POGIS

Yet I cannot avoid the important point in question. You will understand, no matter what misery I have endured by being almost deprived of a son whom I now love passionately, there was the possibility of my expiating my fault forever in silence. But you would have to have a very strong character to domineer over me to that extent, and I should

have had to feel the deepest remorse because of you, you who would be always unforgiving, unrelenting. You should not have let me see you as you are now, with another man!

MME. DE POGIS

Oh, there dear, don't go on!

MARIANNE

In what capacity are you now speaking?

MME. DE POGIS

[*Begging.*] Marianne!

MARIANNE

By what right do you exercise this tyranny? Have I wounded your pride? Is that how your hatred comes out?

MAX DE POGIS

I don't hate you!

MARIANNE

What have you just proved to me, then? Is it out of revenge that you are questioning my right to the child?

MAX DE POGIS

I am not questioning your right, but the right of your second husband! He is the one I hate!

MARIANNE

[*Her eyes flashing at this proof of jealousy.*]
Oh!

MAX DE POGIS

I can't bear hearing of *him* every moment, in the conversation, the plans, the little talks I have with my son. I don't want his tender mind to be molded by a stranger, an amateur, who arrogates to himself the father's rights, and makes a pleasant pastime of it all!

MME. DE POGIS

Oh, Max!

MAX DE POGIS

I never tried to find out about anything that happened here. Every time the child began to prattle about your private conversations (in which he childishly, gaily and legitimately joins) I prevented him. In spite of my precautions, the other day, in a second, he thrust a dagger in my heart. He led me to ask questions. At that moment, I decided to interfere.

MME. DE POGIS

[*To MARIANNE.*] I told you there was something in this I didn't know about.

MARIANNE

Things here are just the same as they were yesterday. You have misinterpreted something, doubtless? What did you think, tell me?

MAX DE POGIS

Our son is in his thirteenth year. Someone has suggested that fifteen is the age of entrance in the School of Marines, and that he should prepare himself.

MARIANNE

He a sailor!—With his weak chest!

MME. DE POGIS

Poor little fellow!

MAX DE POGIS

Please understand that I was not foolishly alarmed about that. I know very well that it is easy enough to rid a child of Louis' age of that idea. But, you see, if I left such an impressionable little being open to these influences, how will such partly destroyed ideas turn out? Since I had begun to ask him questions, I made him tell me about the talks and the stories that excite him so: voyages of adventure, the freedom of a far-off country, the soldier's life, and that brutal custom of lynching!—I even wondered whether the stepfather wasn't actually trying to send to the devil a child who is not his!

MARIANNE

Oh, you mistake perfectly good intentions even if they have a bad effect. I tell you, no one comes near the child who hasn't his welfare at heart. It so happens that not long ago your statement was confirmed. Right here, I saw how different Louis was, body and soul, from my husband! I think I ought to acknowledge that in one regard you are more watchful than I. You have in that way regained your rights to our son. Let us decide on the conditions you have come to make. [*She motions him to a chair.*]

MAX DE POGIS

[*Taken aback.*] My wishes are not so definite, now that you are more generous in your answers. But since you don't deny I have some reason for establishing my rights as a father, here is my offer. Your parents used to have you with them only toward the middle of August at their estate, Dauphiné. In three weeks you leave; those three weeks the boy will have to spend in the unhealthy hot weather of Paris. What if I should take him to Nérange, in the meantime? Wouldn't it be soothing to his overwrought little mind to have him in a quiet country, where he really ought to be?

MARIANNE

Of course! He'd be delighted to be near La Charmeraye, where his little cousin must be by this time. But I should have known about this separation! I ought to have accustomed myself a long time ahead, to a period of such sadness for me, and endless anxiety—

MME. DE POGIS

With his father and me, what could possibly happen to him?

MARIANNE

Oh, I don't know! Only I've never left the little fellow, and I can't bear to see him go, without exaggerating everything, without thinking that I have lost him—

MAX DE POGIS

He'll come back loving you all the more. I don't intend to influence him against you. When I take his face between my hands, I try to see the small resemblance he bears to me, the chin, the cheek-bones, the slight angularity of feature. And then, I trace out all that he inherits from you, that will later develop into elegance; the varying reflections in the pupils of the eyes, the delicate texture of his hair, the arched nostrils, your very mouth—

MARIANNE

Oh, please!

MAX DE POGIS

I only wanted to tell you that I wish to bring him up to resemble us, you and me, and to develop the traits he inherits from each of us.

MARIANNE

I hope we have not transmitted any indication of a happiness which cannot be attained.

MAX DE POGIS

[*Greatly moved.*] Listen: during the brief hours that till this moment he was with me, I called to mind each time a wish that you had expressed at a period when he still expressed himself in baby talk. It was the notion of following up that early idea of yours that I took him, first to galleries, then concerts and pretty poetic plays. You do not perhaps remember what I am going to remind you of, our playing together; when you sang, and

the boy sat up on the cushions. The sound of the music made him prattle, and his face brightened, his little face that was so colorless before, and just like a fairy wish, you decided that we should make him an artist, we two—

MARIANNE

[*Feelingly.*] Yes, I can see again—

MAX DE POGIS

[*In a choked voice.*] It was a long time ago, in this very château of Nérange, where I now implore you to let me take him for a little while—

MARIANNE

Just as you like. The child is here, and I'll send him to you. You can tell him about his trip yourself.

MME. DE POGIS

Thank you, Marianne. [MARIANNE *is about to leave.*]

MAX DE POGIS

[*Stopping her.*] One minute more: tell me that in acceding to my wishes you no longer feel you were the victim of violence?

MARIANNE

I feel happy in giving in to your wishes. I leave you with a better opinion of you than I had. You have again become in my eyes the father of our son.

MAX DE POGIS

For many years, no words have sounded so sweet!

MME. DE POGIS

Oh, my children! [*She breaks out in sobs.*]

MARIANNE

[*Stilling her emotion.*] Good-bye!

ACT III

A room in the château. Up-stage at the left, a high alcove where the bed is placed, the lower end down-stage. Up-stage to the right, a swinging door opens upon the ante-chamber; down-stage, a low door opening upon a hallway... The lamps are lighted.

MME. DE POGIS

[*Before a desk.*] You will find writing materials here, Doctor.

THE DOCTOR

[*Entering through the lower door.*] For the sake of form, I shall take a few simple hygienic precautions, but your grandson is quite convalescent.

MME. DE POGIS

You don't think there'll be a relapse?

THE DOCTOR

What proves my confidence is that I have been all day long on a distant call; and here I am at Nérange this evening, not until after the lamps are lighted and your dinner over.

MME. DE POGIS

Oh, what a nightmare we have been through! Just think! The first time the child was left in

the care of my son and me, we took him right into that epidemic of diphtheria! How should we ever have been able to survive if anything had happened to him!

THE DOCTOR

The same as next door!

MME. DE POGIS

[*Sadly.*] Oh!

THE DOCTOR

I tell you, there is one person here who is nearly worn out.

MME. DE POGIS

Marianne? God knows she looked bad enough when she hurried here from Paris two weeks ago, after the shock of my telegram! She didn't have time to look up her father or mother for fear of missing a train; she came alone, wild with fear. And for her reception, we confronted her with this terrible spectacle: little Louis haggard and purple in the face—unrecognizable, and not knowing his own mother!

THE DOCTOR

[*Shaking his head.*] It was a serious case!

MME. DE POGIS

From that moment on, Marianne took hardly any food. Only once in a while she snatched a minute of sleep, in a chair. She is living only on her nerves; and by taking cold baths! [*To MARIANNE, who enters through the little door at the right.*] Is he asleep?

MARIANNE

He is going to sleep. [*Approaching the doctor.*] Doctor, you told me positively yesterday morning that although my boy was not well enough to be moved, he was out of danger?

THE DOCTOR

And I say it again.

MARIANNE

I have waited a day and a half in order to let you have time to be absolutely sure. And now for the last time I ask you to give me your word that he doesn't need my help any longer. May I leave him without the slightest fear?

THE DOCTOR

I will answer for him.

MARIANNE

The moment I am assured that I am no longer of use under this roof, it is my duty to leave.
[*THE DOCTOR is writing.*]

MME. DE POGIS

Have you any special reason that you are hiding from me, for hurrying away so?

MARIANNE

No. I am hiding nothing. Why should I?—

MME. DE POGIS

Perhaps you object to occupying the room we are now using, because it was once your own?

MARIANNE

Why do you bring that up?

MME. DE POGIS

To let you know that in fitting it up as the nearest room to our little sick boy, I could do so without hurting your feelings. No one, you understand, no one has lived in this room since the day you left it. It has been closed to everyone. It belonged only to silence, to solitude, to things left behind!

MARIANNE

That is enough, Madame!—Believe me, I could accommodate myself just as easily here as elsewhere, if I stayed at all. But I have no reason to remain longer away from where I belong: with my husband.

[*She faints.*]

MME. DE POGIS

[*Helping her.*] Oh, she's fainted!

THE DOCTOR

[*Coming to her aid.*] She's coming to! Let her smell that bottle of salts. [MME. DE POGIS *goes to get the bottle, which is on a table.*] It's nothing, this time.

MME. DE POGIS

[*To the doctor.*] And to think that she wanted to leave this very evening!

THE DOCTOR

[*To MARIANNE, who has regained consciousness.*] Madame, you see for yourself how dangerous it is to excite yourself. You are nearly exhausted. At the first breakdown of your nerves, you are running the risk of a complete bodily and mental collapse. It is my duty to order you to rest.

MARIANNE

I feel that, in spite of myself, I must obey you. I shall not leave until to-morrow morning. But I haven't sent off any news to-day; I put it off till you came. I must at least tell my parents when I expect to arrive.

MME. DE POGIS

It's too late to telegraph, the office is closed.

THE DOCTOR

When I return home, I can drop your note in the box at the station. [*To MARIANNE.*] It will go off on the train you intended to take.

MARIANNE

I'll have it written in a minute.
[*She sits at the desk, looks at the railway guide, and writes her letter.*]

THE DOCTOR

[*To MME. DE POGIS.*] There's no use sitting up any longer; you can tell by the way the child sleeps. Nevertheless, if he should wake, and someone was there, he might give him a spoonful of medicine.

MME. DE POGIS

We have taken no end of precautions. Max and I arranged to take turns. I'm going to have a little sleep while Max watches the first part of the night.

THE DOCTOR

Good!

MME. DE POGIS

You have no further directions?

THE DOCTOR

No, this is all.

[MME. DE POGIS *takes the prescription that THE DOCTOR has written.*]

MARIANNE

[*Leaving the desk.*] Here is my letter.

THE DOCTOR

[*To MARIANNE.*] I'll take care of it. And now that your boy is resting quietly, you are forbidden, you know, to go near him. We know you; you'd commence your watching all over again. Go to sleep, I beg, I command!

MARIANNE

Very well, Doctor. I owe you too much to disobey you, just as I am about to say good-bye and many, many thanks! It is you who have saved my boy!

THE DOCTOR

Oh, I!—It is such devoted parents as you, who help me with their watchfulness! It is rather a mysterious Something which decides these things in spite of us. For, two weeks ago, the night before you came, I was doctor in that other château, by the side of parents just as devoted as you, and the same disease carried off the little Saint-Éric child—

MARIANNE

[*Shocked.*] Is he dead?

THE DOCTOR

[*Vexed at himself.*] Didn't you know?

MME. DE POGIS

[*Looking up from her reading.*] We kept it from you, because the same danger threatened us. You needed all your courage here.

MARIANNE

Oh, God, so that was it! That's why I haven't seen Paulette! You let me believe she stayed away for fear of carrying the contagion to her own home!—What must she have thought of my not saying a word to her in all her trouble?

MME. DE POGIS

She knew that you did not know. She comes every day to inquire about you, but does not come up-stairs, for fear of letting you see she is in mourning.

MARIANNE

I must see her, I must let her know how much I sympathize with her!

MME. DE POGIS

Wait for her here, then. She has not come yet to-day; but she can't be long now. I shall probably meet her when I show the Doctor out.

* MARIANNE

Send her to me.

[MME. DE POGIS *and* THE DOCTOR *go out through the upper door.*]

Oh, poor Paulette—and Hubert!
[*She sobs, her head buried in her arms.*]

MAX DE POGIS

[*Entering through the small door.*] Why are you crying?

MARIANNE

[*Raising her head.*] Our poor cousins!

MAX DE POGIS

Yes, yes—poor people! It's terrible! Did you just hear of it? I knew the moment it happened; the awful vision haunted me at the bedside where we kept watch!

MARIANNE

You went through an ordeal that I know would have killed me.

MAX DE POGIS

And my burden continues to be the heavier of the two. Now you can draw a free breath, since the boy is out of danger, but I come out of a vision in which we were as we used to be to each other. And I am tormented by the thought that it will all fall to pieces again, through my own doing, my absolute madness that drove me once to shatter it!

MARIANNE

You must not speak of our personal relations. The moment I accepted your hospitality, it was tacitly agreed that that subject was forbidden.

MAX DE POGIS

You will not deny that since you have come back here there has been some change of feeling between you and me.

MARIANNE

No, no, there shouldn't be! That's impossible!

MAX DE POGIS

Come, come! During those two weeks that danger threatened us, we lived side by side, we had the same soul. From hour to hour we whispered words of encouragement and distress to each other. And sometimes, in order that one might give a ray of hope to the other, we asked questions, unreservedly, looking deep into each other's souls, through our eyes.

MARIANNE

Yes, there were glances that penetrated deep—but thank God that time is past!

MAX DE POGIS

After what has been, we can never feel so defiant toward one another as we were recently. How absurd we should be, what parts we should be acting, if we did not recognize each other when we met!

MARIANNE

Your life and mine will merely continue along each side of this abyss we have just escaped. For a long time we lived without meeting; it is best never to meet again!

MAX DE POGIS

Why do you say that?

MARIANNE

Because the only imaginable reason for bringing us together again would be our son once more in danger of death.

MAX DE POGIS

Ah, yes, that's right!—He must never bring us together from now on! Dear child! He did his very best the other night, when he tried to make us join hands, with his own shrunk little hands.

MARIANNE

During those moments, when I saw the child coming back to life, I almost went out of my mind.

MAX DE POGIS

And yet you bore up bravely; your nerves forbade your touching me; you drew back so violently

that you cut short the first smile on the lips of the little fellow.

MARIANNE

I did what I ought to have done. I preserved our dignity; I kept my distance.

MAX DE POGIS

Yes, but in following the pathway of the hand that you snatched away I saw again the vision of the day it grasped mine, when we were engaged—

MARIANNE

Stop, for the love of Heaven! Let what is dead lie in peace!

MAX DE POGIS

Don't be angry; and listen to what I am going to tell you. Ever since you refused to let me take your hand, I noticed how freely you gave it, then, in my presence, to my mother, to the doctor, but not to me! Never to me! Well, I want to feel that hand, to-day, now! I shall never rest content until I know in some way that I have been forgiven!

MARIANNE

You have evidently forgotten the kind of woman I am, when you ask me to be party to a deceit—

MAX DE POGIS

Then you don't forgive me? Will you never forgive me?

MARIANNE

[*Desperately; tired.*] Oh, it's barbarous of you to persecute me like this, when I'm nearly worn out! Paulette will be here any minute; let me have time to compose myself. Leave me!

MAX DE POGIS

Of course you must see our cousin. I should not have been in so great a hurry this evening. We'll find a moment before you leave—

MARIANNE

[*Paying close attention.*] Before I leave?

MAX DE POGIS

[*With assurance.*] Yes. When you decide to leave, I shall ask for an interview.

MARIANNE

Why?

MAX DE POGIS

Don't you see, I want to tell you how sorry I am?

MARIANNE

I accept your word for it.

MAX DE POGIS

Oh, no. Some day soon you will let me tell you everything: my wretched excuses, what a botch I made of my life ever since we have been separated—

MARIANNE

I shall not listen to you.

MAX DE POGIS

Yes, you will; you will before you leave! I shall always be near you! I'll make you listen, in spite of yourself!

MARIANNE

Well, you have warned me! Very well!

MAX DE POGIS

Till to-morrow?

MARIANNE

Good night!

[MAX *leaves through the upper door*; PAULETTE *enters through the lower.*]

Oh, my dear! My poor dear!

PAULETTE

I just passed through your boy's room. For a second, I imagined myself two weeks younger, as I felt the warmth of his little forehead on my lips.

MARIANNE

Paulette!

PAULETTE

Do you remember the questions and answers little Toto loved to make when he was so young? "What is it that is always falling and never breaks?—The rain! What is it that's always cold?—The earth!" Dear little one! How cold he must be!

MARIANNE

I want so to tell you—

PAULETTE

[*Peremptorily.*] Don't try! I don't want to spoil the happiness of your first hours of deliverance! I don't want to make you cry; so please say nothing that will make me. Help me to keep from looking into the past.

MARIANNE

What can be done for you? What are you going to do?

PAULETTE

We are both utterly helpless under this terrible blow, and we are the only ones who can understand, can help each other.—Marianne, tell me if I'm mad in keeping this one thought that bears me up; I feel that I have been purified enough by grief, so that I dare to want my husband to give me a child again, in place of the one who is gone. Wouldn't it be another Toto coming into being, if he had the same father?

MARIANNE

Yes, Paulette, yes! That will be the true consolation of your life. You see very well what joy the future holds for you.

PAULETTE

While Hubert and I fought with death for our child, I saw how man and wife could be but one flesh, as the child was part of each. Merely to be

husband and wife does not prevent there being differences, antipathy, open rebellion or, unfortunately, infidelity! But to be father and mother is to be united, bound together, with scarcely any connection with the outer world. Those two are alone, and they are one flesh.

MARIANNE

[*From the bottom of her heart.*] Have you felt that?

PAULETTE

[*Raising her head.*] From the way you say that, I imagine you too have felt it.

MARIANNE

I have to struggle continually to keep from thinking of something that I must put farthest from my mind. Should I take you into my confidence? I have here twenty letters from Guillaume, all full of his love for my boy. But in this time of agony, that note in his letters struck false. In his words of courage, of faith, of hope, he seemed to care about the child only because it was mine. But Max here gave proof of his own affection, and did not merely reflect my feelings. He was my partner, my better half! We were truly two parents of the same being. Yes, I have felt, I have had to confess, that I have not entirely forgotten the man who made me a mother.

PAULETTE

There seems to be only sadness everywhere now! You have kept your child, but lost its father.

MARIANNE

What is my grief compared with yours? You have told me not to pity you; don't pity me.

PAULETTE

Well, I know that in your present state I ought not to prolong this visit. I hear that you almost had a fainting fit.

MARIANNE

Yes, at times it seems as though I can't struggle against my weakness! But don't worry about that; stay a minute more.

PAULETTE

I shall if you lie down.

MARIANNE

No, never mind! Just think, we're not going to see each other again; I leave to-morrow.

PAULETTE

So soon?

MARIANNE

[*Sadly.*] It's high time.

PAULETTE

Has Max tried to prevent your going?

MARIANNE

I have not told him yet. I'll manage not to see him.

PAULETTE

How can you?

MARIANNE

He is taking his turn at watching now. When he leaves I shall meet no one but Grandmother when I go to kiss my boy good-bye for a few days.

PAULETTE

But where are you going to wait until time for the express?

MARIANNE

The talk I had with Max a little while ago decided me to leave before I had intended. I shall take the earlier train; that gets to Paris about the same time as the other; I shall have to leave the house early in the morning.

PAULETTE

Oh, you haven't gone to bed yet! Come now, hurry!

[She tries to lead her cousin toward the alcove.]

MARIANNE

[Alarmed.] No, no, not there! A moment ago I was very brave before Mme. de Pogis. The first time, I remember, I crossed the threshold of that room, I was a young girl, just married—that was our room! Through long years of unthinking happiness, it was here I passed my nights. Here it was that I lived through that last awful night, alone—the day after I saw Max and his mis-

tress—he was kissing her! How can I again close my eyes and keep from thinking of those awful days!

PAULETTE

Come now, lie down. You'll soon fall asleep, you're so exhausted. There always comes a moment when the brute in us overpowers us. I am just learning again to sleep.

MARIANNE

[*Holding her back a last time.*] Oh, my dear Paulette, after a while, whenever you wish it, you'll see how I shall call up the remembrance of things past, of the dear little fellow who was taken from you—

PAULETTE

[*Releasing herself.*] Sh—Never mind showing me out. Rest yourself.
[*She leaves through the door up-stage.*]

MARIANNE

[*Alone.*] I'll rest, then, since they all want me to!

[*She locks the door through which PAULETTE has just passed. She then goes toward the little door at the right, to lock it. While in front of a dresser, she slips off an undergarment, baring her shoulders, and takes out a hair pin which has held her hair in place. She drags herself toward a reclining chair at the left. The moment after she lies down she gets up, turns down the lamp, which is on a nearby table. A noise outside attracts her attention.*]

Someone's there!

[*She looks toward the little door at the right. There is a soft knock. She goes toward the door, and speaks through it.*]

What is it?—You again!—No, I can't open it!—Why must I?—What's happening?—The child hasn't changed for the worse, has he?—Has he?—I don't hear, speak louder. Your voice sounds choked.—Why?—I asked you whether the child had taken a turn for the worse.—Why don't you answer?—Aren't you there any more?—Not a sound!—Gone!—He's made me nervous!

[*As she opens the door, the sight of MAX causes her to draw back quickly. He comes in; she retreats farther, holding a light garment over her bare throat; with the other hand, she attempts to hide the disorder of her hair.*]

Don't come a step nearer, or I'll call for help!

MAX DE POGIS

[*Leaving the door open.*] If you make any disturbance, you will wake your son.

MARIANNE

[*In a half-whisper.*] You have taken advantage of me!

MAX DE POGIS

[*Also speaking in a low tone.*] You yourself, a little while ago, took advantage of me. When my mother said good-night to me, she said you would be gone to-morrow. When you hid that from me, you deceived me!

MARIANNE

I have not been accountable to you for many years!

MAX DE POGIS

I admit that you are under no obligations to me, except those of one human being to another. If I deserve to expiate my crime as long as I live, I demand at least what you wouldn't refuse to the lowest of convicts—the right to have my confession heard.

MARIANNE

Not here! Not to-night! Please, go away!

MAX DE POGIS

I don't want to be fooled again. You have determined to slip away, but this is the last time I shall probably see you, and I'm not going away, and I shall not let you go either.

MARIANNE

We'll see!

MAX DE POGIS

You have only to make a fuss, if you'd like.

MARIANNE

You are taking advantage of my fear of frightening the child.

MAX DE POGIS

I did not think of that; you left me no other time to see you.

MARIANNE

Go away, I tell you—go away!

MAX DE POGIS

I shall not go until you have heard me; not one second before!

MARIANNE

Why do you want to stir up again so much trouble?

MAX DE POGIS

On the contrary, we shall both feel much better for having clearly seen just what has happened to us.

MARIANNE

You think so! I tell you, you are only re-opening the wound—are you determined?

MAX DE POGIS

Yes!

MARIANNE

Very well! The wound can still bleed.
[*She closes the door.*]

MAX DE POGIS

[*Continuing in his natural voice.*] This is what I want to tell you. I was once unfaithful to you, before we were separated; it hurt, it suffocated me. I should not have had the courage to continue much longer. If you hadn't found out my misconduct almost as soon as it began, I should very soon have stopped. But I lost my head when the

blow came. Instead of seeing myself as the only cause of trouble between us, I got angry with you for having found me out. I hated you because you forced me to recognize that I had committed a crime!

MARIANNE

[*Indignant.*] You made *me* responsible! Me! You accused me! Me!

MAX DE POGIS

I am merely confessing; I am showing you how wicked and foolish my false pride, my remorse, my suffering made me! I was ready to plunge into any abyss of iniquity when I felt the sting of your revenge. You insulted publicly the woman who had wronged you; that killed her at once, socially, in our circle and in hers. I don't deny you were right in that. I merely state that I was forced into the company of the woman whom I felt I had dishonored. I was doubtless entirely wrong, I was probably acting according to a false code of honor. But my sin, that you had made public, bound me to my accomplice, out of common humanity, ordinary decency.—God knows I don't want to violate the memory of one who is dead, and who bore my name! Yet I must tell you, I was forced into that marriage, as a sort of reparation for what I had done. And that is how, after my little fling, I was dragged on and on, regretting your loss more and more.

MARIANNE

[*Tearfully.*] When I first learned of your misconduct, you should have done everything to calm me, to regain my affection!

MAX DE POGIS

Do you remember how you cast me off and wouldn't listen to me? You can't imagine how you looked then.—I actually believed that with that blow everything had come to an end between us.

MARIANNE

[*Grief-stricken.*] You shouldn't have taken it so to heart! You shouldn't have listened to that outcry of my jealousy, when I felt that I had lost all confidence in you!

MAX DE POGIS

What? Marianne, if I hadn't implicitly believed your protestations, if I had doubted, or tried harder to protect myself, if I had cast myself at your feet, could you have forgiven me?

MARIANNE

How can I tell? Who knows what might have happened at such a time? I was wild with grief, desperate—I threw myself on that sofa, as if I had been shot—

MAX DE POGIS

God, what I made you suffer!

MARIANNE

[*With a look that seems to penetrate into the past.*] The hours that night passed by while I lay in a trance. I said to myself, "He will try to force the door!"

MAX DE POGIS

Marianne, if I had come, would you have opened it as you did this evening?

MARIANNE

I said, "Would I be so weak that I could not withstand his arguments, his entreaties, his embraces?"—

MAX DE POGIS

Marianne!

MARIANNE

A hundred times I listened, and said, "That is his voice!"

MAX DE POGIS

Marianne, Marianne, forgive me!

MARIANNE

[*Listening as if to the past.*] Yes, I said, "At last it is he! What miracle will he perform?"

MAX DE POGIS

Marianne!

MARIANNE

"Must he not, as his most sacred duty, warm my heart that is frozen against him?"

MAX DE POGIS

Marianne, forgive me!

MARIANNE

"What impossible excuse can he make to keep me from eating out my heart like this to the end of my life!"

[*She bursts into sobs.*]

MAX DE POGIS

Marianne! I was impulsive, hateful, but I have never loved anyone but you! Every thought of love has been for you, for you alone!

MARIANNE

You lie! [*Coming back to reality.*] Leave me! *

MAX DE POGIS

No, don't say that!

MARIANNE

[*Going from him.*] You have carried me off my feet! I'm not well! I don't know what I'm saying! I'm not myself!

MAX DE POGIS

Oh, yes, you are just the same as you were the evening of our marriage, with your hair down that way, and your shoulders bare! You are trembling, you know what I want!

* "You lie" is in the original, the familiar form, "*tu mens*," but the "leave me" is the formal "*allez-vous en*." MAX continues, "Our former *tutoiement* [use of the familiar form] came to your lips."

MARIANNE

You know I can be nothing to you! Leave me, pity me! Don't torture me!

MAX DE POGIS

No, Marianne! Your grief is over. The only evil memory you had left has been buried in this room. Call up, now, all the other memories that belong here, memories of love and joy, so passionate, so sweet!

MARIANNE

Don't, I beg you, please!

MAX DE POGIS

Even if I said nothing, you would still hear the echo of our kisses again—

MARIANNE

I don't want to hear—

MAX DE POGIS

Yes, yes you do! Listen to the air vibrate with the murmurs of our love! Think of our dear child, of his hopes, of his very life, which first came into being in this very room!

MARIANNE

How could you leave me? Why did you do it? Why are you no longer my husband?

MAX DE POGIS

During these last days, when we protected our child from death, didn't you feel it was our very love that we were bringing back to life again?

MARIANNE

It's true, I couldn't resist the thought! Yes, I felt it.

MAX DE POGIS

Ah, I knew it! In the great joy we felt in the recovery of the child, there came the rebirth of love to us. Don't struggle against it any longer. I am the father of your little one, the father who agonized with you for him, and fought with his whole soul. To-night, when we are no longer afraid, when we deserve happiness, the father is brought again to the mother!—Take me! I adore you—oh, take me!

MARIANNE

[*Resisting feebly.*] I am yours.

ACT IV

Same scene as Act I. As the curtain rises, VILARD-DUVAL is seen arranging the books in his library.

VILARD-DUVAL

[*To his wife, who enters.*] I just sent for you a moment ago, my dear. Where were you?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

I got anxious, not hearing from Marianne to-day, and I just said a prayer for the child—

VILARD-DUVAL

Don't worry over nothing; Guillaume left her a minute ago. Here is the letter he had from his wife, dated last night: [*Reading.*] "My dear Guillaume, the doctor has made his last visit. All danger is past."

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Thank God!

VILARD-DUVAL

[*Continuing.*] ". . . I can leave Nérage without the slightest apprehension, to-morrow morning." [*Speaking.*] This morning, that is. [*Reading.*] "I feel a great desire to see you again. Your Marianne." Guillaume actually ran to meet her. Great fellow! I wish you could have seen the tears in his eyes—you would have been touched.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

I know he loves Marianne. Yet I couldn't bring myself to lay eyes on him all the time our little grandson was sick. Somehow it seemed to me that it was his unholy alliance with Marianne that brought all this trouble on her.

VILARD-DUVAL

I know how you feel about this, and I am the first to appreciate your efforts to preserve the peace of our family. And yet I am daring to hope that perhaps a further effort—

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

What are you talking about?

VILARD-DUVAL

Convention has made you receive your daughter's husband here, but you have always refused to go to his home. That is where Marianne is going now, after two terrible weeks. Through her courage she has given us great joy, she brings us happiness. Won't you come with me, in honor of her joyful home-coming? [MME. VILARD-DUVAL *gives a gesture of refusal.*] Yes! As she returns to her home, you'd be the first she would meet!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

It has been my principle to see as little as possible of Marianne's married life. I shall never cross the threshold of a home that desecrates what I hold sacred.

VILARD-DUVAL

Don't condemn it too quickly. Think over the matter. I'll just put on my coat and be back in a moment.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

I shall not go with you.

VILARD-DUVAL

Think it over from a mother's point of view. You have five minutes to change your mind.
[*He goes out through the door at the left, half way up-stage.*]

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

No, I won't go!
[*She sits down with a work basket at her side; turns her back to MARIANNE, who enters through the upper door. MARIANNE, greatly excited, takes off her hat in silence and then her traveling cloak; MME. VILARD-DUVAL turns.*]

You, my dear child! How you look! How did you find the time to come here?

MARIANNE

I haven't been home yet!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

M. Le Breuil went to meet you at the train. Why are you alone?

MARIANNE

I took another train.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*Alarmed.*] Your boy?

MARIANNE

Well, when I left him.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Then you are sick?

MARIANNE

I wish I were dead.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You frighten me—explain yourself!

MARIANNE

You were right when you said that Max was still capable of loving me!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

And you suffer because you love him?

MARIANNE

More than you have any idea of!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Poor child! When I told you to wait for him, I had the power of foresight that is given by faith. If you had only listened to me, if you had remained single, you would now have been ready to return to M. de Pogis—

MARIANNE

Mother, have pity on me!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Come here, dear child! Let me take you in my arms!

MARIANNE

[*Retreating.*] Don't kiss me until you have heard what I have to say! I left Nérage without daring to look my son in the face!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Oh, Marianne! I think I—understand!

MARIANNE

Yes! Don't ask any more! Last night Max came to my room!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

With your permission?

MARIANNE

No!—Yes!—I don't know! There was a time when he was absolute master of my body and soul, when he had the right to conquer my aversions, to overcome my shame All the powers of resistance that women can summon up I felt leaving me. I felt an intoxication, as I used to; I felt no shame in giving myself to a passing stranger!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You are right—you were to blame for disposing of yourself without being honest enough to sever your connection—even if it was not a good one—with M. Le Breuil! What I consider wrong in

your conduct is your second marriage—without the sanction of the Church—that is sin!

[VILARD-DUVAL *has come in; surprised at the attitude of the women, he listens.*]

I have always considered that there was between you and M. de Pogis an inseverable bond. I believe in the depths of my soul that your only husband is he who was given you at the foot of the altar. I cannot condemn you. I refuse to consider your act a disgrace—you have merely become his wife again.

VILARD-DUVAL

[*Interrupting.*] What's that?

MARIANNE

[*To her father.*] Were you listening?

VILARD-DUVAL

[*Overcome.*] Poor child! You, my dear child! You did that?

MARIANNE

[*To her mother.*] There are some confessions a woman can make only to her mother! Hide me!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

In so serious a matter you must conceal nothing from your father.

VILARD-DUVAL

[*To his wife.*] I interrupted just as you were doing her the injury of condoning her wrong-doing. What can you mean?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*To her husband.*] I have never recognized M. Le Breuil as my son-in-law. It is your duty to make amends for your mistake, and get rid of him.

MARIANNE

But think, mother, what I have to answer for to the man you speak of so lightly!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*Tenderly, to her daughter.*] Hush! [*To VILARD-DUVAL.*] The only foundation of her marriage with M. Le Breuil is a divorce; dissolve it in turn by a divorce.

VILARD-DUVAL

You're out of your mind. Even if Guillaume agreed to it, Marianne could not again be known as Mme. de Pogis; she must become a widow. It is against the law to marry the first husband after a new divorce.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Then—Marianne's situation is hopeless! If you see a clear way, any possible way, out for her, tell us!

VILARD-DUVAL

[*To MARIANNE.*] Listen, my dear: your mother forced me to interfere in a matter in which I wish I could have spared you pain by keeping silence. But, as I have begun, let us continue, shall we?

MARIANNE

Oh, I have fallen so low!—I feel so humiliated in discussing it with you,—I can't stand anything but your trying to help me!

VILARD-DUVAL

[*Authoritatively.*] You were carried away in a moment of madness. You have just learned that your first husband cannot legitimize your union with him. I shall not insult you by supposing that you would continue your secret relations with him.

MARIANNE

Oh, no! I shall not do that; I could never live in such an impossible position! I shall not see M. de Pogis again.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*To MARIANNE.*] You're mistaken; in the first excitement of victory, he will follow you!—Confess, you love him. You love one another. Take my word for it, he will follow you!

MARIANNE

I have thought of a way—a few hours ago—that is always ready, of escaping such infamy.—I have already come near killing myself.

VILARD-DUVAL

Oh!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You must put away that horrible thought! Coming from you, it terrifies me!

VILARD-DUVAL

You have a child, Marianne. Never forget that. It is your duty above all else to live for him.

MARIANNE

Dear little one! The thought of him came to me—Oh, forgive me, both of you! The thought of him was the only thing that prevented me from throwing myself under the wheels of the train!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*To her husband.*] Did you hear that? Do you realize that so long as Marianne is in this frightful dilemma we are on the brink of a catastrophe, so long as she struggles against a love that attracts her, a love that has rights and duties for her!

VILARD-DUVAL

[*To MARIANNE.*] I tell you your only duty is to atone for your wrong against Guillaume; he only has claims on you.

MARIANNE

I am so confused, I can only think of one thing; my unfaithfulness to Guillaume.

VILARD-DUVAL

We must plan at once what you are to do when you see him.

MARIANNE

[*Terrified.*] But I came here to avoid him!

VILARD-DUVAL

He went to meet you. He will come to ask where you are.

MARIANNE

[*As above.*] That's true!

VILARD-DUVAL

At any moment he will be here in this house.

MARIANNE

[*As above.*] Oh!

VILARD-DUVAL

He will think it strange that you did not return at first, after your long absence, to your own home.

MARIANNE

[*Starting to go.*] My own home!—With him! No, no, don't ask me to do that! Not that!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You see she is physically unable.

MARIANNE

Oh, I have sunk so low!

VILARD-DUVAL

If your husband should find out the truth, wouldn't you have pity on his despair? You must appear calm, and keep his peace of mind!

MARIANNE

To keep him from suffering I would willingly lay down my life; I was ready to a few hours ago. I should protest and tell you what inspires me, if any words of respect and affection did not at this moment, and on my lips, sound terribly ironical. Yes, so long as I was faithful to Guillaume his love was my happiness. But now, I should be afraid of the approach of his love. I simply cannot demand mock respect for myself. I can't bring myself to being handed from one man to another! No, no, not that! I can't! I can't bear it!—

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*To her husband.*] Let her be! Only a woman can see that she is revolted at the idea, from the bottom of her soul!

[*A bell rings. M. and MME. VILARD-DUVAL and MARIANNE look up, and exchange glances of tragic anxiety.*]

VILARD-DUVAL

[*To his wife.*] You weren't expecting anyone?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

No.

VILARD-DUVAL

[*Looking at the door.*] He's just had time. It's Guillaume.

MARIANNE

Oh!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Keep him waiting; say that Marianne is not here.

MARIANNE

But think of the concierge who was so glad to see me! And the valet who opened the door for me! Guillaume can't help knowing that I'm here.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*Hurrying her husband.*] Keep him! Gain a little time. [*To MARIANNE.*] Go to my room!

VILARD-DUVAL

That's right! [*To MARIANNE.*] Hurry.
[*He leaves the room, up-stage.*]

MARIANNE

To have to hide myself like this, and run from room to room! No! I refused to return to Guillaume's home because I didn't want to conceal anything from him; that would have been defiance. But here in your house, I am not base enough to run away from him.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

It was he who just came in; your father hasn't returned to let us know.—What are you going to say to him?

MARIANNE

What I must, what I ought!—I haven't thought!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Be careful! Your hands are ice-cold; you—you're not yourself!—You're going to do something you'll regret—

MARIANNE

I shall never be so composed as the moment I meet Guillaume. Why keep back the inevitable?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Perhaps I can find a way to prepare the first shock, then; for my sake, go, please!—

MARIANNE

All right. I'll wait.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Hurry!

MARIANNE

[*At the door to the left, half-way up-stage.*] I'll wait.

[*She goes out.*]

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Entering with VILARD-DUVAL at the back; briefly.*] Good morning, Madame.—Where is Marianne?

VILARD-DUVAL

[*To his wife.*] I told Guillaume how shaken up and nervous she was when she arrived.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*To GUILLAUME.*] Oh, yes; she must have absolute silence, perfect rest.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Seeing me cannot do her any harm, can it?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Nobody must go near her; nobody.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Pardon me, but you must let me be the judge in that case. You make me very nervous.

VILARD-DUVAL

No need for worry! She'll be well soon. The strain of the little boy's sickness has overexcited her. It came near being delirium. She just needs time to calm down—

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Yes, to calm down!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

You only make me more nervous; what you say irritates me—I feel something mysterious in the air—

VILARD-DUVAL

What are you looking for?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Nothing. I want to see my wife.

VILARD-DUVAL

It is our duty to prevent you.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Certainly!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Very well, I demand!—I must see my wife!
[*Taking a step forward.*]

VILARD-DUVAL

Not another step!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Let me speak to him. [*To GUILLAUME.*] I have determined to say something you must listen to. I am not authorized by Marianne; I say it on my own responsibility. You know that only a few hours ago, she had reason to believe that she might lose her son. She must have heard my voice again, telling her again, as always, that her connection with you threatened some terrible punishment. Well, the child recovered. But, in exchange, this impious union is dead; Marianne can no longer consider herself your wife.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Incredulous.*] She wishes it?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Believe me, for I have strengthened her resolution. You must think of Marianne as separated from you by the power of a vow.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Impossible! She would have let me know something of so drastic a step! How was it that she wrote me only yesterday so joyfully about her return?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You see, however, that she came here—to ask for advice. And her father and I, seeing how ill she looked, would not let her see you.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Oh, no! If Marianne, for her part, has decided to dispose of us both, I insist on having something to say in the matter, at once.

VILARD-DUVAL

Don't be in so great a hurry!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Ask my wife to come here!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

No, you come back in a few hours—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Again stepping forward.*] Either she comes here, or I'll go to her!

VILARD-DUVAL

Oh!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*Stopping* GUILLAUME.] No, don't you go! I shall bring her here.

[*She goes out the same door through which MARIANNE went.*]

VILARD-DUVAL

It is my belief that Marianne has something on her conscience, but that it's not very serious. Don't

start any heated argument and have her begin to tell you a heap of impossible things. Treat her as a patient, humor her, tell her that she will be perfectly well in a few days. This time, cut short the conversation.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

And afterward?

VILARD-DUVAL

My wife and I intend to go to Dauphiné, so that the child's condition shan't give us cause for worry. We take Marianne with us at once. Give us a week, and I feel sure I can bring her back to reason, and make her do what is best for your interest and ours.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Your affection makes me confident. I have no other object in life but my wife, her health, and what is best for her. I shall do what is right, the moment she tells me what she wants, what she—
[*Enter MME. VILARD-DUVAL.*]

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*To GUILLAUME.*] Marianne is coming. [*To her husband.*] She wants to be left alone with him.
[*She goes to the lower door at the left.*]

VILARD-DUVAL

Oh, very well. [*To GUILLAUME.*] Remember what I told you.
[*He follows his wife out—MARIANNE appears.*]

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

At last, Marianne! It's you I see, at any rate, even if you have changed toward me!

MARIANNE

Yes, it's I; you wanted to see me!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Is it true that you have sworn some oath, something sacred, that puts me out of your life?

MARIANNE

Not that.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Why did your mother pretend you had?

MARIANNE

She thought she was doing right.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Well, what is it? [MARIANNE *tries to speak, but cannot.*] If you cannot speak, suppose I help you?

MARIANNE

If you wish.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Will you answer truthfully everything I ask?

MARIANNE

Everything.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Your trouble has nothing to do with your son's illness. It comes from the man you have seen again?

MARIANNE

Yes, from him.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Something has come to trouble you, to recall your past life, while you were there with your former husband. He understood that, didn't he?

MARIANNE

Yes.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

He took pleasure in blowing on the embers?

MARIANNE

That is possible!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Violently.*] Oh!—That thought came to me, while you were left to yourself in such an unusual position! Understand me, you are one of those women whose actions a man can never suspect!—But I saw you—in spite of the mere external politeness accorded you—I saw you receiving one of those looks that a man gives to a woman who has once been his—wait; one night, six or seven months ago at the theater, M. de Pogis was in a box—you didn't know he was there—I saw his eyes, just as they were fixed on you. I can't tell you how I

felt!—Incessantly during these last two weeks I could see those same eyes looking at you, with the same meaning in them. I was jealous of your first husband; I saw red, I was blinded!

MARIANNE

[*Terrified.*] Oh!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

You left, then, sooner than you intended. Why? Was it to avoid anything further?

MARIANNE

I don't say that!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

You promised to answer everything.

MARIANNE

[*Nearly exhausted.*] I have answered so many questions already. You are torturing me!—Oh, don't imagine too much evil in what I'm going to tell you!—If I am overwrought, nervous, it's because I am a woman! I can't help shuddering when you go so deep into my inmost thoughts and feelings and bring them to light! Don't ask me anything more! Stop!—Let me go!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Of course, when you ask like that. If you came back earlier because of something disagreeable that you don't wish to talk about, let us drop the subject. [*Trying to smile.*] The important point is that you are now safe from the influences, even the

attempts, that might have changed you entirely. As you say, your nervousness has no foundation—Or, well what? What do you want me to think? [*Attempting to conceal his anguish under an appearance of jocularly.*] That you have come back because of a feeling of regret? Have you come to me from a sense of duty? Are you sorry you are not the mistress of that château? Don't you—love me any longer?

MARIANNE

I have never felt for you, Guillaume, more than at this moment.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

My dearest, you make me profoundly happy. I needed that assurance. Now, I shall see that you forget all these phantoms of your imagination. Your parents offered to take care of you for a little while. But, for your good, no one can take such care of you as I, your husband, I, your lover—

MARIANNE

[*Terrified again.*] You're not going to take me away, I—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Yes, to our home!

MARIANNE

Oh, Guillaume!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Our home! How much those two words express! What impatience, love—!

MARIANNE

[*Seeing him come toward her.*] What do you want?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

To kiss you!

MARIANNE

Don't touch me!—Don't force me!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Embracing her.*] You know I have always a little of the brute in me, even with you!

MARIANNE

[*Begging.*] Leave me!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Just a kiss!

MARIANNE

[*Desperately resisting.*] You mustn't!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Only one! A real one!

MARIANNE

No, no!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Now I have you!

MARIANNE

[*Putting her hand over his lips.*] No—not with your lips! [*But, as GUILLAUME has taken her hands in his, she can only prevent him by crying out.*] I was his!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Stepping back with a wild guttural exclamation.*] What?

MARIANNE

I can't stand it any longer! I have been unfaithful to you! Do what you want with me! Kill me!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

You—you—tell me it was a trap!—Not of your own free will?

MARIANNE

There was no forethought. I didn't wish it!—It was Fate!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

In throwing yourself on that man's mercy, did you know you loved him?

MARIANNE

No, I didn't! I can't explain anything! I don't know, I don't know!—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

You say you were caught in a moment of madness, like a beast—?

MARIANNE

Torture me! Yes! Spit your disgust in my face—kill me with shame!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Relenting a moment.*] The shame is mine, to be such a coward as to cry!

MARIANNE

Oh, I could bear your defiance, but not your tears.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Recovering.*] Calm yourself; it's all right now. My vengeance is elsewhere.
[*He starts to leave.*]

MARIANNE

[*Stopping him.*] Where are you going?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

To find M. de Pogis.

MARIANNE

I was the only one who owed duties to you. Don't make him responsible.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Are you afraid for him?

MARIANNE

I don't want both of you to suffer through my wrongdoing.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

We shall not fight. I was calm now only to please you; now I am no longer accountable for what I do. I am going to kill M. de Pogis!

MARIANNE

You shall not leave here with that threat on your lips!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Come, I have a long way before me; let me go.

MARIANNE

[*Holding him as he drags her along on her knees.*] Trample on me, but I will hold you back!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Twisting her wrists and forcing her to loosen her grasp.*] You force me to hurt you.

MARIANNE

[*Letting go with a cry of pain.*] Oh!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Leaving her on her knees.*] Goodbye. [*He goes out through the upper entrance.*]

[*MARIANNE rises, sobbing, and runs to the door through which GUILLAUME has gone. At this moment M. and MME. VILARD-DUVAL, who have heard MARIANNE's last cry, enter in great haste. Hearing them, MARIANNE stops, standing near the door.*]

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*Entering first; horrified at MARIANNE's appearance.*] Oh, God!

MARIANNE

[*Pointing to the door.*] Stop him!

VILARD-DUVAL

[*Taking MARIANNE in his arms.*] Tell us!—
We'll make it right. Tell us!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

My poor girl! My poor child!

MARIANNE

[*Choked with horror, crying spasmodically.*]
Stop him! Stop him!

ACT V

A terrace, with trees on it. It is bounded up-stage by a railing, with perpendicular spikes. At the right, the rustic barrier is rounded into a corbelling; at that side are a table and chairs. To the left and right are foot-paths. Down-stage to the right is a garden bench. Down-stage to the left, a table and two rustic chairs. Dead leaves strew the ground. Here and there geraniums are set in circles around certain of the large chestnut trees. In the distance is seen a precipitous stream, winding in and out of the hills. It is the last of September, toward the hour of sunset.

At the rise of the curtain, MME. VILARD-DUVAL sits alone by the table at the left. Her work-basket is by her side, as she works. MARIANNE, entering by the path at the left, joins her.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Well?

MARIANNE

Well, they're having a long walk! Louis's tutor has not sent him home yet.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

They took the plant collection with them, and the butterfly net. That's what has taken them farther off than you would have liked, to the hillside. But

the little fellow is in fine condition for walking. I brought him back from our trip as healthy as could be.

MARIANNE

But it's September!—The sun has just set, and the mists are beginning to rise from the Rhône.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Your father has gone to tell them to hurry up.

MARIANNE

I hope nothing has happened to them!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Of course not!

MARIANNE

I'm afraid of everything now; I'm nervous every moment.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

I, too, my dear, have just learned what it is to be so apprehensive, to be on the alert all the time. I felt it ten days ago, when I went ahead of M. Le Breuil to the château of Nérange. What an awful sensation it was when M. de Pogis obstinately refused to escape from the danger that threatened him!

MARIANNE

And I was the cause of his murderous intentions.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

How could I have persuaded a man of undoubted bravery to seek refuge in flight; to leave his home surreptitiously? Oh, little good it seemed for me to tell him he must avoid bringing the most disgraceful scandal on your name, and to pit myself against all the time-honored and deep-rooted masculine prejudices! Nothing short of a miracle made him go. It was another miracle, too, that M. de Pogis in leaving the château almost too late avoided meeting M. Le Breuil!—Marianne, you should see that Providence has a hand in this!—you may breathe freely, now that this terrible catastrophe has been averted, since Max has disappeared—

MARIANNE

Disappeared!—Shall I tell you where he is? He is on the other bank [*Pointing to the place*]—stopping at an inn there.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

What did you say?

MARIANNE

Yes, thanks to the conversations you had with him, he knew just where to find me!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Has he been here?

MARIANNE

No!—Fortunately, he will keep away from me until I give him permission to come. But every

day I get a letter from him, filled with his prayers and supplications. He uses for messenger a little fellow who lives around here, and who finds ways of meeting me, right here in the park. Only this morning, I did not want to open the letter in which he asked me to meet him. But, as usual, I was afraid that perhaps it might contain some insane plan, something I should have to prevent at once! For that reason, I always read the letters. But I never answer!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Why didn't you tell me about this?

MARIANNE

Oh, why did I tell you now?—I was impatient when you told me to rest assured that I could draw a free breath. Don't be surprised that I have for some time kept this hidden from you. I tried to keep my shame from you, buried in silence. At least, I don't want to read in my father's eyes that you have spoken to him again of these matters! Don't tell him, promise me, that Max is so near?

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Just as you like.—But since you told me one secret unwillingly, perhaps you have another? Since that scene with Guillaume, have you really heard nothing from him?

MARIANNE

No, nothing!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

It has been more than a whole week since he

started off in pursuit of Max! What can he be planning? What has become of him?

[VILARD-DUVAL *enters by one of the paths on the right.*]

MARIANNE

Have you come back without Louis, father?

VILARD-DUVAL

Don't alarm yourself. The farmer, here, met your boy and his tutor in the fields only a short time ago; they were bringing home a great heap of wild flowers. But they have to walk slowly, because the aged professor gets out of breath—

MARIANNE

I never heard of such a thing

VILARD-DUVAL

I would have gone to get the stragglers where I was told they were, only I met someone and was detained—

MARIANNE

Met whom?

VILARD-DUVAL

Guillaume.

MARIANNE

Guillaume!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

Then he, too, is in this part of the country!

MARIANNE

How long has he been here?

VILARD-DUVAL

He just came; he doesn't know this house. He was trying to find the door.

MARIANNE

What does he want?

VILARD-DUVAL

He wants to speak with you.

MARIANNE

I thought we had nothing more to say to one another!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

What reason did he give in coming?

VILARD-DUVAL

I didn't ask. I didn't think I had the right to open that wound again.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

How does he look?

VILARD-DUVAL

Bad. He keeps turning his eyes as if he were trying to conceal how much he had been crying.

MARIANNE

[*Deeply moved.*] Oh!—

VILARD-DUVAL

[*To MARIANNE.*] Tell me what answer I shall give.

MARIANNE

It would be too pitiful for me to see him.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You must see him at once, or he might keep wandering about here.

MARIANNE

[*To her mother.*] You're right! [*To her father.*] Let him come.

VILARD-DUVAL

Good!—I'll take him into the house.

MARIANNE

Oh, no!—There is no use arousing the curiosity of the servants and starting them to gossiping. He can come in through the little gate; it's near at hand, right by the terrace.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

But it's almost night!

MARIANNE

For what we have to say, it will be better for us not to see our faces too plainly.

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

How can we leave you so far from the house, at this meeting? I'm afraid—! We could hardly hear you at that distance, if you called for help!

VILARD-DUVAL

My dear, Guillaume has not come to harm her!

MARIANNE

Oh, mother! Cowardice is the last thing to expect in such a man!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

I suppose I was wrong to think such a thing.

VILARD-DUVAL

[*To MARIANNE.*] Well, here, then?

MARIANNE

Yes, here.

[*VILARD-DUVAL returns by the same path he came.*]

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

You have only a light shawl to keep you from the coolness of the evening. It's getting damp.

MARIANNE

I don't feel cold!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

It will be too late when you do feel it. Here by the side of the river! I tell you there's nothing imaginary about my fears this time. Come and put on a cloak!

MARIANNE

Oh, never mind that!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

I must at least prevent you from falling sick!
Do let me do that for you, at least! Please!

MARIANNE

Poor mother! All right!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

I'll pick up my work. Go on ahead, I'll follow you.

[MARIANNE *leaves by the path at the right.*]

VILARD-DUVAL

[*Entering, right, with* GUILLAUME.] Here!

MME. VILARD-DUVAL

[*To* GUILLAUME.] I made Marianne put on another wrap; I'll send her to you in a moment.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I'll wait for her.

[MME. VILARD-DUVAL *goes out to the left.*]

VILARD-DUVAL

Sit down.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Thank you. You needn't trouble to keep me company.

VILARD-DUVAL

Guillaume, I have not had the opportunity of telling you how glad I was when I caught sight of you. You didn't say much, either. We both rec-

ognize that this is not the moment for a conversation, but I should like to have, before I leave you here, some assurance that will make the interval at least bearable.—Just tell me whether you have come in an attitude of—well—of conciliation?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I wish I could tell you where I stood, myself! The strongest feeling I have now, I firmly believe, is my love for Marianne!—I want to find a support in her for what I am going to do in this case. Don't ask me anything else!

VILARD-DUVAL

I know better than to trouble you. I'm going to keep Marianne a few minutes. As I am telling her what your intentions are, as I understand them, I shall try for the last time to dissuade her from what she intends.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Anxiously.*] Oh!

VILARD-DUVAL

I'll leave you.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Very well.

[VILARD-DUVAL *goes out to left.*]

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Alone.*] He seemed to say that Marianne might perhaps refuse to accept my forgiveness! Then she will have to tell me whether she prefers

to give herself to the other! [*Clenching his fist.*]
Oh! [*Looking off at right.*—Who's that?
[*A YOUNG PEASANT comes in half way up-stage at the right. He does not see GUILLAUME until he almost runs into him.*]

YOUNG PEASANT

[*Retreating.*] Oh!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Did I frighten you, son?

YOUNG PEASANT

[*Trying to escape.*] Excuse me!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Running away? Were you prowling around here?

YOUNG PEASANT

I haven't done any hurt.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Cutting off his retreat.*] What were you doing there? What have you there under your coat? It looks like a knife!

YOUNG PEASANT

Let me go!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Seizing his hand.*] A letter! [*He takes the letter.*] No address! That's what you were carrying? To whom? Will you answer me?

YOUNG PEASANT

Don't hurt me!—I've got to give this to the person herself.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Who?

YOUNG PEASANT

The young lady.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Who sent you?

YOUNG PEASANT

The traveler, who just came a little bit ago; he's staying with my boss, on the other bank.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Looking in the direction indicated.*] There!—
So he's there!—[*To the YOUNG PEASANT.*] Is he
waiting for an answer?

YOUNG PEASANT

No. He knows I live in the town, over here. I
don't cross again to-night.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Is your boat down there? [*He points out to
where a boat might be, below them.*]

YOUNG PEASANT.

Anybody could see you don't belong to this part
of the country!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

What do you mean?

YOUNG PEASANT

I cast anchor a good distance off; I crossed upstream. You can't cross straight over along, 'cause of the rocks just under here. You've got to have a man's arms to row over here.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Why?

YOUNG PEASANT

[*Pointing to the chasm.*] You hear the whirlpool?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Taking a step back to listen.*] Is that what it is?

YOUNG PEASANT

Goes straight down. Fall in there, and they never find you, alive or dead. Never do find bodies in that place!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Yes?

YOUNG PEASANT

Why, I remember one time—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Very well, you may go!

YOUNG PEASANT

[*Fearfully.*] But the letter?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I'll take care of it.

YOUNG PEASANT

You won't get me into trouble, will you?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Violently.*] — Oh, get out!

YOUNG PEASANT

[*Cowering.*] Certainly, sir!—Well, it ain't my business, anyhow!

[*He goes out, right.*]

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Alone, hesitating a moment before opening the letter.*] Why not? [*He tears open the envelope.*] Oh!—She has refused to see him again! He insists! He says he will succeed! [*Reading.*] “There is a way to meet without compromising you. I shall come at night-fall to that terrace, whose solitude we have so often loved. I know you will wait for me there, you will receive me, unless your eyes, your will, your very heart lied to me that night at Nérange.”—He's coming!—Good!

MARIANNE

[*Entering at the left.*] I hear you.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

After what has passed, I thought I was forever separated from you, but I needed more than the inspiration of revenge to sustain me. I am worn out with this thirst for vengeance; it is in your power this minute to prevent me from carrying out my threats. If you tell me in the depths of your heart that you still preserve some love for me, and you will take my love in return—I am ready to give in, I shall be even happy to accept the exchange—tell me!

MARIANNE

Guillaume, I was yours once in good faith. I was your wife; as such, I had not a single thought, or dream or wish that was not honorable. But because formerly my conscience was clear, now I see more plainly than ever how impossible it is to forget what is past.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Nothing that I do or say will ever remind us of that. I am positive, because unlike most women, you scorned to tell a lie and so take advantage of me. I shall keep you, and respect you, and think of you always as one who has given proof of the bravest loyalty. I can't forgive myself for having been so brutal, so cruel, to you. I ask you to forgive me, as I forgive you. Let's forget everything!—Everything!

MARIANNE

Your forgiveness, I believe, is absolutely sincere; I admire you for your frankness! Thank you!

But I cannot forget, I never can forget! You remember how I hesitated the other day before I confessed, for fear of what you might do to me? And then, only to terrify me more, you took me in your arms and kissed me. And the truth came out in a cry of agony only when I felt that something cold and dead was at my lips, something that will always be dead between us!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Don't say that!

MARIANNE

I tell you, don't ask for what I cannot give. I can never belong to you, never!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Never?

MARIANNE

[*With a tone of finality.*] Never! Never!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Oh! You have perhaps made other plans. If I don't spoil these, you expect to include M. de Pogis in them?

MARIANNE

You don't know me, Guillaume!—My right to be loved, my right to your love, or the love of anyone else, I have forfeited, thrown away, by the strength of what pride I have left, and by renouncing absolutely every thought, everything that makes me a woman! I have only to do my duty as a mother; I must live with my boy a quiet and cloistered exist-

ence. You are so generous, you would not object to my trying to redeem myself in this way? You would not prevent me by invoking our marriage contract?—You will let me do this? Will you?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Do you think I would go to law? My love for you was what bound us together. What hope I had left you destroyed to-day, with unmistakable directness. I shall not force you to take me back as your husband. So far as I am concerned you are free!

MARIANNE

Guillaume, I can't tell you how I appreciate your goodness—I am too—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

But don't think you have everything your own way! The moment you lose me as a protector against him, he will consider you the more legitimately his *prêy*. You were speaking of retiring somewhere with your son? I tell you the child is the bait that he has already used, and will use, to lure you on, to conquer you!

MARIANNE

Oh, don't take away my confidence! I need it so badly! If the person you are thinking of should be too importunate, if I felt he was acquiring too great an influence over me, I should take the boy away. I should take him—anywhere, far away, far away—to the end of the world! That's possible, isn't it? Tell me, that would be right, wouldn't it? His father has cost me so much sorrow that

I owe him nothing more! See, I'm crying now. I can't stop! Tears of anguish, of fear—I am afraid of him!

[*She sobs violently.*]

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

How you love him!—Oh, yes you do! Yes! Confess it! Why not? You needn't be ashamed with me!—You love him, wildly, heroically! Tell me you love him and would do anything for him! Tell me, tell me!

MARIANNE

Why do you force me to give you such an answer? Because I want to run away from you, no matter how I feel toward him?—You're breaking my heart! Don't make me suffer any more! I am so unhappy!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Affected by her tears.*] Oh, Marianne, don't cry! Not like that! Don't wear yourself out! Please! There! Wipe your eyes! Listen; the day you accepted me as your husband, I promised you happiness, I promised that I would lay down my life for you. It was not in my power to give you happiness; it's clear that I did not belong in your life! My existence is now nothing without you! It's nothing to me!—Go, fulfil your destiny; at once, publicly! You are able to now!

MARIANNE

What—what do you mean? What are you thinking of? Do you imagine that I could “fulfil

my destiny" over your dead body? Listen to me. I see only two possibilities for the future. He, like you, must respect and recognize my return to the home of my parents, to the life I lived as a pure young girl. But if I begin to see that I am drawn toward the man who has caused you so much pain, my own honor would drive me to the other possibility; I'd kill myself!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Kill yourself! You! No! Leave that to the others! It's too horrible! No, not you!

MARIANNE

I swear to you that if M. de Pogis continues to follow me with the intention of making me his, I will kill myself!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

No, no! That face I have so often kissed, that body I have loved so—dead! Disfigured! I can stand anything but that! I couldn't bear to carry that thought through my life! Anything but that!

MARIANNE

No, Guillaume, it is better, nobler, that you should leave without looking behind you, without a jealous thought! I have shown you only too well that I could not lie to you. Don't you believe this last vow?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I believe it with all my heart and soul. If nothing could prevent what you fear, I believe you would kill yourself!

MARIANNE

Then you won't have a single jealous thought of me? Tell me!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I shall never be jealous of you, Marianne, I promise. You may go! There's no use prolonging this ordeal. Go, we have said everything we had to say; it's time for us to separate.

MARIANNE

Where are you going? What are you going to do?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

I'm an old wanderer. I'll probably go on a long trip, I don't know where.

MARIANNE

You have been everything to me; inspiration, hope, happiness—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

But not love!

MARIANNE

My dear, my dear—*[She falls to her knees before him.]*

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

What are you doing?

MARIANNE

Good-bye—oh, all you have been for me! I humbly thank you! [*She kisses his hands.*] Good-bye, good-bye!
[*Sobbing, she hurries off at the left.*]

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Alone.*] Yes, good-bye! [*Going toward the precipice.*] My trip? Why not start here? [*A sound from the right makes him turn in that direction.*] Someone in the bushes?—

MAX DE POGIS

[*Holding back some branches, appears, at the right of the corbelling. Seeing GUILLAUME, he steps back.*] You!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

That is the second time, Monsieur, that you have retreated from me.

MAX DE POGIS

[*Recovering.*] I was informed that it would have been dangerous to have been found unarmed by a man of your character. If you have by this time recovered your sense of what is customary, I shall await your orders! Send me your seconds!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Our account can be settled without the intervention of anyone else!—You have insulted the woman who bears my name! It is as a libertine, a seducer—

MAX DE POGIS

I could insult you too, if I liked!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

You took what you wanted, and you knew very well that when you were through with her you would leave her—

MAX DE POGIS

You don't know what you're saying. You're talking like a crazy man!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

In coming here to-night, you were going to make some proposal whereby she would be able to have me as her husband, and you have her as your mistress!

MAX DE POGIS

Do you want me to explain? All right. I was going to ask her to come away with me, go abroad—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Really!

MAX DE POGIS

I was going to tell her that anywhere outside of France, we could go as man and wife. As long as you have the law on your side, in this country you could follow us, separate us, put us in jail—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Even kill you!

MAX DE POGIS

Oh!—You don't still intend to murder me, do you?

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

What do you imagine prevents me?

MAX DE POGIS

You have had time to consider; you can see that in a case of this sort, you would not appear in a court of law as the conventional "wronged husband."—Your rights? The greater part of our society would consider them the rights of concubinage.—My crime? I merely took back my wife!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*With great reserve.*] Is that all?

MAX DE POGIS

No! You wouldn't look well in the prisoner's dock. The legitimate son of the woman you call your own; her son, and my son, might be brought into the trial; that son might cry out for vengeance against you, his step-father, his make-believe father—against the make-believe husband! You have only to think of so many serious difficulties, and you come to your senses.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

We agree on one point. I shall not appear in a law court.

MAX DE POGIS

[*Ironically.*] There!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

This is what I have done. I just left Marianne Le Breuil, my wife, free to dispose of herself as she sees fit. I made her absolutely independent of me. I shall never see her again—

MAX DE POGIS

Just as you like!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

One moment; at the same time she told me that she was determined never to see you again, never!

MAX DE POGIS

It matters little to me what she may have promised when she was temporarily under your influence.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

Of her own accord she swore that she would never survive the shame of belonging to you again! I have therefore taken it upon myself to prevent the possibility of her killing herself because of you.—You are going to promise me—I'll see to it that you do—to leave the poor girl in peace forever.

MAX DE POGIS

[*Violently.*] Oh! I am to accept your conditions! You think I'll agree!—You're crazy!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

No, that's my last bit of sanity. Look out!

MAX DE POGIS

I have only one thing more to say: You gave her up because she didn't love you—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

You damned—!

MAX DE POGIS

I know she loves me!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*With increasing fury.*] You—!

MAX DE POGIS

I should never believe her! I'd come back every time she sent me away!—

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

You—!

MAX DE POGIS

I'll never give up the woman I love, and who loves me! D'you hear? Never!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

You have just pronounced sentence on yourself!

MAX DE POGIS

That remains to be seen; a duel will decide the question. Get your seconds; I'll get mine. A duel to the end. One of us must go.

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

No, both of us!

MAX DE POGIS

What—what are you—? Let me pass!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Preventing him.*] Not that way! [*Pointing into the chasm.*] There!

MAX DE POGIS

[*Attacking GUILLAUME.*] Let me pass!

GUILLAUME LE BREUIL

[*Grasping MAX's hand firmly, as the statue does.**] Come forth, Don Juan!

[*There is a quick struggle. Under the weight of the men, the wooden railing gives way; MAX and GUILLAUME fall down into the chasm. The voice of MARIANNE is heard in the distance, off-stage to the left.*]

MARIANNE

Louis!—Louis!—[*Entering.*] They say the child is looking for me in the park. I thought I heard someone calling in this direction—

[*A child's voice is heard off right: "Mama! Mama!"*]

It's he! My little one!

* In Molière's "Don Juan."

LITTLE LOUIS

[*Carrying bunches of plants.*] Mama! Mama!

MARIANNE

[*Gathering him in her arms.*] Come here, my life! My love!

[*Along the edge of the precipice, below which are the vast silence and the peace of death, the mother takes the child toward the house, where he, in his turn, will grow into manhood and work out his destiny.*]



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